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IN DEFENCE OF SENSUALITY

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FOREWORD

The author feels that perhaps some explanation is due to the reader for the rather unusual employment of the word "Sensuality" which serves as the title of this work. The advantage given to the author by the use of this particular expression is that it enables him to proceed from rock-bottom upwards as far as he likes. A more refined title would have cut him off, in his method of developing his idea, from the physical roots of existence ; for while it is easy to indicate the overtones and undertones of Sensuality it would be hard to bring a gentle, vague word, like the word "sensuousness" down to the bare, stark, stoically-stripped Life-Sensation which is the subject of this book.

How far has the individual the right to be what is called "selfish"? How far has he the right to concentrate on his own solitary awareness of existence and make this alone his life-purpose? Is there such a thing at all as a Religion of Nature or a Cosmic Ethic? Such are the questions the author attempts to answer ; and he finds that in his discussion of the root-sensations of life the word Sensuality, taken in an unusually comprehensive sense, serves his purpose better than any other word.

J C. P.

IN DEFENCE OF SENSUALITY

by

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Dedicated
to the memory of
that great and much-abused man
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I

There are probably many original philosophies that are completely lost, simply because of the conventional preference of academic thinkers for pseudo-scientific traditional jargon and their contempt for plain speech in these high matters. This philosophy of mine shall at least not be lost ; though whether it will prove of lasting value to any considerable number of readers, even among kindred minds, is a very different question. Such as it is, it is an attempt to emphasise what I regard as the sub-human and super-human elements in our cosmic awareness, and to reduce the claims of certain gregarious human ideals, which according to my view have muddled-up and sometimes dried-up the primordial wells of deep delight. It is, in short, an attempt to substitute a " purpose of life," better adapted to the real secret of the universe, for the one usually, though very vaguely, held by the majority of what are called " civilised " people.

Let me begin these considerations of our general situation by isolating the individual mind. Will my reader endeavour to cut away every single impression of his or her immediate surroundings except the barest, nakedest consciousness of self and not-self—of his or her subjective inmost " I am I," as opposed to the objective mass of objects around it, including the idea of its own body ? You are now, then, whoever you are and

wherever you may be, reading this book—a bare, lonely “monad,” or “soul,” or conscious “self,” contemplating this limitless floating mass of mental impressions. Nothing exists for you now except your conscious “I am I” and this great mass of objective mystery at which you gaze ! You are completely alone. That is the beginning and end of everything ; and I must beg you, whether you are a man or a woman, to recognise this ultimate fact. Now, it is, I know well, quite possible for you to remain absolutely sceptical of every subsequent step in the evocation of our world. To this lonely “I am I,” contemplating a floating mass of exterior impressions, some vivid and some faint, it may very likely be that you will return, without being convinced of anything else, when all my argument is over. But you have really, whether you admit it or not, given me a very good start for my argument, simply by accepting these simple premises (as I hope you have done) of the “I am I” or “self” at the core of your experiences, contemplating what is *not* your “I am I”—what is *not* your interior “self.”

Now let us consider a little this “I am I” of yours. In my opinion—although you may differ from me in this—it is an inevitable law of the way your consciousness functions, when it works at all, that it should think of this mass of floating impressions around it—what we generally call the *universe*, but what may easily be a *multiverse*—as having a number of centres or cores of inmost being, similar in nature to that interior “self,” or “soul,” or “ego,” of which you yourself are conscious. For just as your own most intimate envelope of external

impressions is your body, so also, following an inevitable law of the way your consciousness functions, you cannot escape the idea that all these more remote impressions, resembling in their objective materiality the impression which you have of your own body, are themselves the "bodies" of other "selves" resembling your own. Now let me lead you, O lonely "I am I," whoever you may be, one step further. Within this "I am I" of yours, you are conscious of a feeling of power—of the power, in fact, of *causing change*, change in the position of your own body, change in the position of other bodies—change, in fact, in what we have called "the universe." Your "I am I," therefore, as you inwardly feel it, is possessed of a *causative power*. Now, it is my opinion that your mind is compelled, by the inner law of the way it inevitably functions, to ascribe the whole congeries, or "multiverse," of "souls" and "bodies" with which, on the analogy of your own, you have peopled Space and Time, to the causative power of some ultimate Final or First Cause, whose inward sensation of conscious power and will resembles your own. .

Having got thus far, please let me, I beg you, my dear reader, carry you a step further with me ! Among these floating impressions coming to you from the "not-self," such as you have just now, by inevitable analogy, allowed to be "selves," with bodies parallel in some degree to your own, there will be many—such as rocks and stones and trees and fish and birds and reptiles and beasts—that are obviously sub-human ; and there will be a few, though infinitely rarer—such as a vague

consciousness of mysterious spiritual forces—that seem to be super-human. Now, when you try to analyse the contents of your deepest and most individual self, it is my opinion that you will find there a great deal of the primordial passivity of rocks and stones and trees, and also, at rarer moments, certain fleeting feelings that seem to connect you with the super-human.

You have now, you see, by analysing your consciousness and pondering upon your consciousness, discovered the fact that this “I am I” is no hollow, abstract shell, or husk, or barren power of perception, but is a real, living, organic, mysterious being. It is at this point that I want to persuade you to make one further step. I want you to think of this rich, strange, deep inmost personality of yours, that uses your body but is so much more than your body, as possessed in a very real sense—as it surely is—of both those extra-human extremes, namely the sub-human extreme and the super-human extreme.

When once you have granted me as much as this, I have all the help I require to get really started. I have my “I am I,” confronting a “multiverse” made up entirely of other “I-am-I’s,” with their visible or invisible “bodies.” I have discovered a power of will and of causation in my “I am I”; and from the analogy of this I have deduced a corresponding causative energy in some extra-mundane “I am I,” the First Cause of all existence. I have analysed this “I am I” of ours and found it to contain elements of organic consciousness that are both sub-human and super-human.

Well ! It is at this point that I am going to take the liberty of coining a name for a certain mingling in our "I am I" of these sub-human and super-human elements. And I am going to call this mingling by the name of *ichthyosaurus-ego*, in order to emphasise the remote vegetable-reptile-saurian background of the human soul.

But it is only here that the main contention of my book begins, namely : that the deplorable unhappiness which we all seem to suffer from in these days is due to the fact that the gregariously human elements in our "I am I" have crowded out both the sub-human elements there and the super-human elements there. The purpose, therefore, of this book is to make war upon certain gregarious elements in our modern life, and upon certain gregariously human traditions among us, such as seem to me to be slowly assassinating all calm ecstatic happiness, the only kind of happiness that really is worthy of organisms with the long history and the large hopes of ours.

A certain concentrated play of the senses and of all those subtle, psychic overtones and undertones that surround the senses—this is the fluctuating and yet the eternal ground of my argument. I advocate a life-worship of static contemplation in direct opposition to all the activities of our time. And I indicate that every kind of sex-sensation is good—not only good, but also excellent, admirable, desirable—so long as there is not any element of sadistic cruelty in it. This wicked prejudice against sex-sensation is, however, only one of the examples of the manner in which the gregarious

instincts of humanity have ruined the happiness of the individual. This book contains a few rough hints as to what may really turn out to be a new "culture" in the Spenglerian sense. Such a new "culture," such a new Religion, must, it seems to me, be at once a reaction from a mass of human tradition that has gone (so to speak) sour, and a return to a remote past whose magical secrets have been almost lost amid the vulgarities of civilisation.

Loneliness is the first-born of Life ; and Life's most difficult task is to establish a compromise between it and Love, its second-born sister. The First Cause had to sink deep before It found the place wherein to discover Its own Loneliness ; for Loneliness implies individuality, and individuality is not visible at first sight. On the apparent surface of the beginning of things there is no individuality and no loneliness. Whirling masses of fiery vapour, motions, vibrations, ethereal currents, energies, electrons—what have these to do with individuality or loneliness ? Suns belonging to stellar systems, moons belonging to suns, the homogeneous mass of our terraqueous globe, so much ocean, so much land, so much rocky, metallic substance—where is there place here for individuality or for loneliness ? Deep and ever deeper have we to look ; but the individuality is always there, if we look deep enough.

The lowest forms of life *seem* an eternal sequence of the same thing. The species, the race, seems the unit. Advance a little further, and still, on the surface, you find living things dwelling together, growing together,

living and dying together, in apparent indiscriminate proximity. Masses of grass, of moss, of lichen ; beds of seaweed, beds of rushes ; flocks of birds, shoals of fishes, swarms of flies, colonies of insects. If you want to observe an apparent example of the lack of any desire for loneliness, in the early stages of reptile-life, observe a number of crocodiles together. Apparently identical in every respect, they lie side by side *touching at every point*. They lie above, below, across one another. Look as closely as you may, you can detect no evidence that one crocodile, or one alligator, ever *gets on the nerves* of another. They are apparently too low in the scale to have the least wish to be alone. But all this is superficial. In the drowsy consciousness of every one of these creatures there is real loneliness and real individuality.

Parallel with loneliness, the first-born of the spirit, we find love, its second-born, growing stronger and subtler, pace by pace, as the other develops. It is hard to believe that there can be any quivering thrill of ecstatic delight in the coupling of toads, in the herd-amorousness of flies, in the automatic eroticism of fishes. But this dullness of belief is our human limitation. It is not possible to generalise about the interior feelings of animals. The lion and the eagle may be less lonely than they are reputed to be. The cow—the divinest of all animals—may be very lonely in her mind, and may prove to dream the most individual dreams. The elephant, wisest of beasts, is a herding-beast. But allowing for all these deviations, the essence of the matter remains as I have put it : that the noblest creation of

the spirit is Loneliness—its most difficult task the adjustment of Loneliness to Love.

It is often very late in a person's life when he makes the exciting and illuminating discovery that we all have a right to sink down into the depths of our individual being and judge everything from that standpoint. This extreme point of private judgment, this philosophical "solipsism," has been ably and acutely refuted again and again. There can be no doubt that an immense number of cogent trains of logical thinking are capable of exposing this attitude and reducing it to nothing. But all the same I think it is the right attitude. One comes, by degrees, as one gets older, to regard learning and logic and all those lower forms of the mind's activity—such as the older German philosophers used to name "the understanding"—with more and more suspicion. If you give me a mathematical proof that an objective philosophy is superior to a subjective one, your reasoning does not influence me—no, not one jot or tittle! What I use when I think, or when I come to a tentative and suspended conclusion, is what Cardinal Newman (who Carlyle said had no more brains than a rabbit) was accustomed to call the *illative sense*. By this I fancy Newman meant very much what Matthew Arnold indicated when he used the expression, *imaginative reason*; and I take it to mean a sort of complicated and sublimated vision of the totality of a person's individual nature, including his bodily senses, his intuitive and instructive powers, his imaginative and emotional reactions, together with whatever small portions of

reason and logic the gods may have been pleased to throw in. It would be in accord with the inspired "private judgment" of William Blake—which certainly was carried to the extreme limit—to call this use of the totality of a person's nature by the proud name of Intellect. Whatever it may be called, it is that conscious spear-point of anyone's personality which carries with it the full weight of his body and soul, and also of what is still known as his "will."

It is with this conscious spear-point of his complete identity—of his "I am I"—directed toward the ambiguities of the universe, that I am concerned. This is the "self" whose judgments on things and people I intend to isolate and explicate—the "self" whose individuality, like water seeking its own level, naturally grows lonelier and lonelier, and yet, in its loneliness, comes to realise more and more the mystery of love.

The "I am I" within us looks around itself, *feels* around itself, each morning of its life, as if it were consciously reborn to a strange and new existence. In gathering itself together to face a new day, it picks up, one by one, the sleep-scattered threads of its previous experience, and hurriedly weaves them into a strong, full-flung sail, ready for winds from any quarter. Such an "I am I" and conscious "self" finds, as it replunges into the waves of experience, that it has formulated certain habits and usages of emotional reaction to life, which these new shocks only accentuate and emphasise.

One of these habits may well have come to be a

stubborn resolution to be happy at all costs. Let us consider this resolution for a moment. Only dimly conscious may it be in certain natures ; but in others, more alive to themselves, it will be definite and clear. Our essential loneliness has a chance here of proving its mettle ; for the objective, historical, traditional view of the psychology of happiness is that it is impossible to attain this desirable condition by taking thought. The " self " within us, born afresh, as it were, to the new universe of a new day, has every right to be profoundly sceptical of such traditional opinion. Experience has taught us that, in all other regions of desire, the will has a formidable and cumulative efficacy. Then why not here ? Why not in the matter of happiness ?

True enough it is that moments of thrilling happiness mysteriously come and go, evoked apparently sometimes by one circumstance, sometimes by another, almost always by small external things, apprehended in certain lights and under certain physical states of bodily condition. But the more self-conscious our ego has grown to be, the more clearly has it come to grasp exactly what those occasions are which, in a certain reciprocity of external object and mental reaction, evoke this feeling of happiness. Such occasions will, of course, differ very materially in different lives ; but I believe on the whole they will be found to be compounded not only of extremely simple elements, but also of elements that can easily be selected from amid the flow of impressions of our ordinary diurnal routine.

ranting that the immediate flood-gates of happiness are shut for us according to laws of our being that remain very mysterious and obscure, it is, at any rate, quite within the power of the will to concentrate the mind steadily upon those selected objects, upon the contributory emotional reactions to those objects, which, when these mysterious laws are in harmonious operation, automatically produce the desired feeling. There will arise, be it noted, at the worst, even if those magic flood-gates remain shut, a certain faint degree of grim satisfaction in the mere recognition that, in spite of hindrances, distractions, discomforts, and even of painful suffering, we have adjusted the machinery of the mind into what might be called the ritualistic structure. This at least we have done : we have prepared the altar, consecrated the bread, poured out the wine. If the wings of the god do not now stir the air, it is not our fault. And even if the occasion passes, as easily it may, without the least quiver of those divine feathers, there will abide in our mind that peculiar sense of ultimate satisfaction—not happiness itself, but the familiar *landscape* of happiness—which the mere overcoming of difficulty, the mere obedience to a self-imposed “catharsis,” triumphantly achieved, has the power of producing.

But there now arises a much more difficult question. What justification have we for thrusting this universal factor—the Protean Mystery we call “happiness”—into the seat of the high gods ? In other words, how can we defend our eccentric faith that a mere “sensation,” common to all living organisms, is the ultimate secret

of life, its intellectual aim, its spiritual culmination? What about the Good, the True, the Beautiful? What about love, heroism, the Will of Heaven? What about the triumph of "spirit" over "matter," of "good" over "evil"? In plain words, how can all those various forms of human idealism that, in our race's long pilgrimage, have been the far-glimpsed battlements of the City of God, be reduced to so concrete a formula?

By a very simple process can they be so reduced! By a recognition that the *quality* of happiness is capable of an indefinite refinement and an infinite ascent. If we took, one by one, in a rigid Socratic analysis, these other claimants for the first place in the fulfilment of the purpose of life, we would, I think, find that it would have to be some sublimated Essence of the Good, the True, the Beautiful, some Essence wherein these three illusive ideals coalesced, and, in coalescing, included the more human passions of love, duty, heroism—that finally emerged as *the alternative* to happiness. Let us consider such a comprehensive Essence.

In the first place, could it be regarded as something really universal—in other words, as something applicable not only to human beings, who, after all, are only one tribe among the infinite children of Life—but also to all conceivable consciousnesses, sub-consciousnesses, and super-consciousnesses that Life generates? Can we conceive of the sluggish wits of a slow-worm occupied with the pursuit of such a pure, high, abstract Essence? Can we conceive of some great, diffused, planetary Consciousness reducing its mysterious cosmic ecstasy

to fuss about such an evasive abstraction as Beauty or Duty? Does a maggot in an apple visualise the Categorical Imperative? Does the fluctuating, undulating *anima mundi* conceive of the pursuit of Truth? Can a minnow in a river-shallow lift itself up to the idea of Self-Sacrifice, or the somnambulistic psyche of the Moon dream of Heroism?

The universe is rich and strange ; and the imaginative reason of man is aware of many atavistic reversions to the sub-human life of the animal and vegetable worlds. And when it is a question of the ultimate secret of Life, it seems a sort of human megalomania to limit it to moral ideals that are peculiar to our species alone. And there is yet another thing. To be effective as a living stimulus under every possible condition, our fundamental world-gesture must be a very clear-cut, concrete one. This our attitude to the sensation of happiness *can* be ; when no other motion of the mind could possibly be so.

The *constituents* of happiness, all the drifting intimations, all the feathers and straws, all the rumouring whispers and wandering touches, all the faint nuances and delicate sideways-thrusts that compose the fleeting complex of happiness, are no doubt anything but simple. But these floating vapours gather, as a rule, round very primitive external objects. At all events, the original motion of the mind, where our will and our attention are focused upon the gesture of receptivity, is absolutely clear-cut, definite, solidly of one piece, and simple. And this is essential : that the ultimate gesture of the individual consciousness, faced by the mystery

of life, should be extremely simple. We must be able at any second and almost automatically to re-produce it. It must be something that is the natural *life-movement* in us, only a little more "willed" and deliberate than breathing itself. It must be something that attends the flicker of a fish's tail, the thrusting-forth of a snail's horn, the swish of an elephant's trunk, the stir of a wolf's penis, the hovering of a hawk's wings, the cow's chewing the cud, the snake's basking in the sun, the urge upwards of the bulb's shoot, the unclosing of the fern's frond, as well as the creative thrill of the poet, the amorous thrill of the lover, and every muscular and intellectual activity of which our human nature is capable. It must, in other words, be something whose expansive quality lends itself to indefinite refinement and to infinite ascent. It must be something that accompanied the somnolent stretching and yawning of an ichthyosaurus in the primeval mud, and that will accompany the tremulous consciousness of the first human soul that finds an unanswerable proof of immortality.

But there yet remains another argument, stronger even than these, and to my mind quite conclusive, in favour of concentrating all our attention upon happiness both as the secret of life and as the purpose of life. And it runs as follows. Let any individual soul isolate itself to the extreme limit of its power. Let it realise to the fullest measure whatever degree of real loneliness it has had the wit to develop. Here, with its "I am I" detached and aloof from all other identities, with its central being separated from all traditions except the simple power of consciousness, this detached and

lonely soul, sinking down into itself, contemplates the huge, dim, obscure mass of the external world. Waves of impression flow in upon it from this vast objective mystery, lying like a great unfathomable ocean, round it, below it, above it. Alone, and confronting the unknown, it cannot hinder these waves of impression from washing up against the "little, hard crystal" which is its conscious core. Here it is, then, a potential god, a potential shell-fish : just simply *a* consciousness, confronting the abysses of Time and Space.

Now, suppose this consciousness to be endowed, as all the consciousnesses we ever encountered *are* endowed, with that potent inward feeling (against which our particular generation has such a quaint prejudice) called the Will. What will the reaction of this conscious Will naturally be toward these inflowing waves of sensation, some very much pleasanter in their effect than others, some quite distinctly unpleasant ? For it must be remembered that upon this sensitive plate of the lonely mind two parallel tides of impressionistic waves will be felt flowing in, namely those that come from the objective world, and those that come, carried upon wings and sails and deep sub-aqueous keels, from the auto-energy of memory.

What will be the conscious reaction of the will-power of the lonely self to all these contradictory impressions ? We know from experience what the *unconscious*, spontaneous reaction is ; because it is precisely the mood we fall into when we make no deliberate attempt to direct our thoughts. It is the mood we fall into in hours of

day-dreaming, especially when we are half-awake and half-asleep. It is, in fact, a state of mild, lethargic curiosity, combined with a feeble instinct to tell oneself stories. But the conscious Will, confronting these two parallel waves of image-vibration, the one objective and the other subjective, does not at all content itself with a mild passive curiosity, or with a feebly-stirring fancy. It asserts itself. It exercises a definitely creative energy upon this double stream of impressions. It is not just passive under them. It acts upon them ; it materially changes them ; it transforms them. One can analyse exactly what goes on—one can compare these two states of mind, the passive and the active—by using a little delicate introspection as one lies in bed, in a semi-somnolent state, in the early morning.

Suppose one is in bed, then, under such conditions. Vaguely one contemplates a flicker of sunshine upon the opposite wall. Vaguely one notes the fluctuating outlines of wavering leaves seen through the window-blind, or their shadows cast upon it. Vaguely, through a chink between window-blind and window-frame, one watches a slow procession of white clouds. So far I have enumerated a few among the objective flow of images. In addition to these, there comes into my mind an interview with a certain official that I have to face this morning ; and with a sort of lazy, vicious, faintly disgusting stir of my fancy (for one's thoughts frequently *enjoy themselves* " on their own " in a manner that causes their master discomfort rather than pleasure) I visualise the most unpleasant features of the official's face, and feebly begin fancying what expression it would assume

if one had the presumption to administer to it a sudden well-merited buffet. These same wandering and disconnected thoughts, hunting across the misty landscape of the mind like a languid pack of weak and drooping dogs, now hover around another "worry," and, quite without permission from their lord, begin playing with the teasing idea that I ought to lend my old friend Bartrum twenty dollars. Floating in and out of these disagreeable thoughts there steals into my consciousness a vague sweetness, like a remembered hay-field, evoking what is really a faint sensuality, although unconnected with any particular young person of my acquaintance.

In addition to the outward flow of impressions (represented by the yellow light upon the wall) and the inward flow of impressions (represented by the hay-field feeling) there must be added one example at least from a third avenue of sensation, namely the body itself. This, let us imagine, takes the form of an obscure question in my mind as to whether a certain discomfort felt in the pit of my stomach means a return to-day of my old gastric trouble.

Here I am, then, stretched out on my back, like an ichthyosaurus on its primeval mud, isolated from all other identities. It is at this point that my imaginative reason, or complex vision, or "illative" sense, call it what you please—I mean the self-conscious sinking-into-itself of the "I am I"—can meditate, if its Will tends that way, upon the ultimate feeling of being alive. I am an animal, a vegetable, a reptile, a man—a lonely, isolated mind, confronting its universe. Now I take all these separate streams of impression that flow

in immediately upon me—the yellow sunlight on the wall, the teasing thoughts about the official and about poor Bartrum, the obscure discomfort in the pit of my stomach—and I find that beyond and behind these is a very distinct consciousness of my “ I am I ” as a lonely, individual mind that has its own history—that has, in fact, a “ dark backward and abysm of time ” behind it, full of dim floating shapes, landscapes, images, dramatic human groups, hateful disquiets, and thrilling episodes of magical loveliness. I arrive at this synthetic view of myself only because I now choose to do so ! My Will is at work now. I am beginning really to wake up and to take up again my habitual philosophy of selective experience.

Before my “ I am I ” made this secret movement in its interior being, its conscious identity (the core of its life) was obscured by all these feeble, disconnected, wandering thoughts, which, as if with a weak, silly, drifting semi-identity of their own, went wool-gathering across that insubstantial land that is half a misty Limbo and half a disturbing Chaos of only too palpable and obsessing material objects. But now that my Will has got formidably to work, things begin to fall into their proper perspective. In those early stages of awaking, the very consciousness itself was disoriented, broken up, incoherent, scattered, like so many drops of quicksilver rolling aimlessly about in a jolted box. Now that my central mind is at one with itself, it resumes its old familiar feeling of the body being the outward expression of its inward personality. And not only has it obtained a unity for itself : it has also obtained, by a

definite motion of its Will, a unified, external Cosmos, toward whose known and unknown qualities it directs the lonely spear-point of its undivided attention. All this habitual consciousness of itself, all this resumption of the thickly strung thread of personal memory, was implicit all the while and latent ; but it was concealed by the aimless ripples of thought on its surface, which, like circling water-flies and water-beetles, made such a stir, that the depths of the water were invisible.

Consider my " I am I," then, my interior ego, at one with itself, realising its absolute loneliness, and gathering itself together to face whatever it may be that its environment holds. This is the point where my mind, lonely and unworried, begins to review the various purposes and ideals of life which the human race, in its long history, has evoked. This mysterious external universe, pressing in upon me from all sides, falls first, let us say, into a vast organic unity of material and mental elements, behind which, beyond both time and space, dwells a stupendous Being, like myself in possessing an " I am I," but unlike myself in other respects, whose incredible Intellect and Will have been the causes of all life.

What, then, as I lie on my back, a human reptile, meditating on this First Cause, will be my natural, spontaneous reaction to Her, or Him, or It ? Surely it will be a very simple reaction, made up of a very few definite elements. Fear will predominate, of course ; for, after all, how else can I conceive of this mysterious Power than as a formidable and terrifying Spirit, whose body is the starry ether and whose creative mind is as

prone to cruelty as it is to mercy ? Cruel it *must* be, the mind of this Power behind all life, because of the abominable vein of cruelty in all its creations. An artist it must be, to a degree absolutely overwhelming, because of the magical beauty of certain aspects of Nature.

After fear, then, what I shall naturally feel will be a thrill of pure abysmal gratitude toward this thing, gratitude for the "pleasure which there is in life itself," and for my personal good luck. It was obviously in the power of this great Spirit to have directed towards me that kind of unrelenting cruelty which It has directed, all his unlucky life, towards my poor friend Bartrum !

After this gratitude, what I shall feel next will be simple indignation with this stupendous Power for inventing the various diabolical traps of suffering into which not only my unfortunate friend, but also millions on millions of persons, animals, birds, fishes, reptiles, are remorselessly led.

By a little turn, however, of the wheel of my mind, it is possible for me to visualise this guilty First Cause as a Being who once made a ghastly mistake in its creative movement, and is even now putting itself to infinite labour, weariness, and distress, in the effort to get things straight again. Thinking of it after this fashion, one's indignation against the cruelty of life may be a little assuaged.

But there is another and much bolder view of the Absolute's guilt. One may use, in one's anger, the sublime help of the daring Christ-mythology, that supreme

act of auto-salvation of the troubled human race, which condones the cruelty of existence in a much subtler way. For what, when one puts it in plain terms, is the concept behind the Incarnation ? Nothing less than man's determination to reconcile himself to this original sin, or blunder, of the First Cause, by which so much cruelty entered the world, by conceiving the staggering idea of this great Spirit's own terrific suffering ?

The usual *moral* argument brought forward in defence of the Creator's tolerance of misery, namely the doctrine of human free-will, seems, when one lies on one's back in this mood of absolute detachment, a good deal too simple. For the deeper one sinks into one's own interior being, the more complicated and mysterious seem both suffering and free-will, and the less obvious and easy to unravel appears the strange connection between them.

One aspect of this unfathomable problem of evil, in connection with one's attitude to the First Cause, is alone sufficient to shift the stress of the whole question : I mean the fact that in certain very deep moments one has the curious feeling, full of a thrilling magnetic power, of being oneself an integral portion of this ultimate creative energy. In the presence of a feeling of this kind, the moral conception of free-will as a thing of human responsibility, in relation to some universal Law of God, falls away, and seems singularly irrelevant. For in these deep, strange moods, one is oneself both God and Satan, both Zeus and Prometheus.

But this whole concept of a great First Cause, of a one supreme Power, including everything and beyond

everything, may be totally erroneous and wholly untrue. The ultimate secret of things may be a Many, and not a One. The atheists may be right. There may be nothing, in the whole panorama of Life's infinite dimensions, resembling any kind of God or gods. In this case, my "ichthyosaurus-ego," lying on its back on the bed as if it were lying on a mud-bank and letting its mind wander through eternity, need not worry about a First Cause. Life has always been a lavish and wasteful waterspout of elements, chemicals, organisms, dynamic electricity, ghosts, demons, gases, grasses, phantoms, fairies, furies, rainbows, and vibrations ; and as it was, so it is, and so it will ever be, "sans dieu" and "sans cesse" !

But to my mind, as I lie here—to my lonely mind, using its "private judgment" and taking no thought of "*securus judicat orbis terrarum*"—there will be very little practical difference between the one great Being and the agglomerate congeries of a chaotic Manifest. What my nature seems to require, for obscure purposes of its own, is some ultimate Thing or things, God or gods, Spirit or spirits, with which, as I lie on my back, watching this yellow light on the wall, and drowsily thinking of pleasant hay-fields or of infuriating officials, I can enjoy the satisfaction of a one-sided dialogue.

Why is it that my nature demands this ? Well, I do not think it is hard to answer. It is because of a simple desire in me to know the very best and the very worst of what I am to expect from life. I am in the midst of this crazy, overpowering world, at once so weirdly

phantasmal and so horridly, so glaringly real. I know that it is unlikely that this chaotic surface of things—thus represented to my senses by yellow light and white clouds and flapping window-blinds and by such vivid images as that accursed official's face—*is all there is*. But even if this show of things *is all there is*, my ichthyosaurus-nature would like to gather all this together, in one hard, compact, tight lump of dark-glittering life-quartz, and so to commune with it as my ultimate First Cause.

Why does a person feel this longing—that *must* be satisfied like hunger or sensuality—for some sort of communion with the First Cause, the underlying reality, the bed-rock, the absolute, the irreducible element, the secret of life ? Spinoza said that what drove him on to seek God and to rest in God was a desire to find something unchangeable to love. This, I think, is rather a peculiar, rare, and singular motive. Some of us are too primitive, too cold, too self-centred, too malicious, too ichthyosaurus-like, to be moved, in these queer depths, by a desire to love something unchangeable. No ! It seems to me that this movement towards some ultimate and irreducible thing includes much more of our whole identity than merely love. It is not only the love-necessity in us that thus drives us forward. It is everything in us ; it is our whole nature ; it is the urge of our whole personality, including our worst as well as our best instincts. It is not an ideal striving or a moral striving or a spiritual striving : it is the natural urge of all organic sap, like the thrust, both up and down, of a growing plant. It is not a desire to repose on

the unchangeable : it is a craving to set our lips where the breasts of the great mother hold the fountains of all sweetness, new as the next moment, and old as the first moment. It is water seeking its level. It is a living creature, pushing the dead leaves aside, to reach the springs of life.

Let me put the case once more, as crudely and bluntly as I can. The secret of life is not " Beauty " or " Truth " or " Goodness." It is not any one final Beatific Vision. It is not to grow wiser or better or more complete. It is not to improve ourselves or to improve the world. These are *what it is not*. Let me weigh my words more carefully as I come to what it is. It is to enjoy life in a certain way, and with a certain quality of enjoyment. All enjoyment—or it would not be enjoyment—has a measure of it ; but in its essence it is only a *certain kind* of enjoyment. This is the point. This is the rub. What kind of enjoyment is it ? What kind of happiness is it ?

It is a certain kind of self-conscious enjoyment that has behind it the full energy and strain of the will. In other words, it is the exact opposite of the relaxed, will-less state that is popular with psychologists at the present day. I would go so far as to say that the larger portion of the enjoyment I advocate springs from the mere exertion of the will-to-enjoy. Herein lies the advantage of the kind of enjoyment I am analysing. It depends so much more upon the gesture, the motion, of the solitary mind, than upon the objects—whatever they may be, subjective or objective—upon which it exerts its power.

To return to my own ichthyosaurus-like position, as

I lie on my back opposite that yellow light upon the wall. I am alone, and only aware of very moderate mental worries and very moderate physical discomforts. Increase these worries, however. And increase these physical discomforts. The yellow light is nice to look at, but my eyes are weak. I do not depend on that yellow light for my happiness. In fact, I shut my eyes. The thought of slapping the face of that annoying official is a pleasant thought. So is the vague sensual feeling I derive from the idea of the hay-field. But I do not depend any more on these mental images for my happiness than I do upon the physical image of the yellow light. I cast them both from my mind. I *forget* them both. This art of forgetting *what I decide to forget* is an essential part of the process.

As far as the immediate inflowing impressions of the minute are concerned, both inward and outward, I sink down below them. I am unconscious of them, or only half-conscious of them. What *am* I conscious of? I am conscious of the "first cause"; I am conscious of the obscure weight of the whole stellar universe emanating from the "first cause" and pressing in upon me from all sides. But I no longer am aware of it in detail; or I am only faintly aware of it in detail. Its details, whether physical or mental, have become like the faint buzzing of a drowsy fly. Automatically, as such details threaten my art of forgetting, I brush them off my consciousness as I brush a fly off my face. I am a lonely mind, in a solitary body lying on its back, contemplating the sum-total—or some fanciful symbol of the sum-total, which serves just as well—of the universe.

Now, my happiness at this moment is something entirely deliberate, self-conscious, and willed. I call it up, in fact, out of the depths of my own being ; and the mere effort expended in calling it up becomes an important part of it. It does not matter in the least under what vague grotesque symbol I choose at that moment to represent the sum-total of the universe or the First Cause behind the universe. I can think of the former as a great rotten apple, and of the latter as a maggot in the apple, or as a grub at the root of the apple-tree. What does matter is that the will-power I am using is the same sort of will-power *that I am in the habit of using*. What does matter is that, however grotesque and arbitrary my immediate representation of the sum-total of the universe—or the “multiverse”—may be, it shall carry with it *something* of the physical and mental feelings that I habitually associate with whatever visions of large landscapes, broad horizons, and starry skies I may have had in my experience.

In other words, if I think of the world as an apple, it must produce the effect of masses of earth and water ; and if I think of the “first cause” as a grub, it must produce the effect of a very energetic, but also a very cruel, centre of force. It satisfies a certain malicious profanity in man’s heart to think of the “first cause” as a spiteful grub, just as it satisfies a certain pathetic reverence to think of it as the Soul of the World.

But all these symbols are irrelevant, unimportant, absurd. One can use the most exalted, grandiose images, and it comes to exactly the same thing. One can think of the whole universe as a round ethereal ball, or one

can think of it as a dim Elysian pasture washed by a Cimmerian sea. One can think of the "first cause" with the most solemn idealism, as a Great Spirit, brooding over the face of the primeval waters, or one can think of it as a mad Demiurge. Such images no more adequately represent the real chaotic universe we live in, or the appalling and completely unthinkable Mystery behind it, than a line from Homer or a sentence from Dickens represents the look of a modern street ! Reality is always harsher, more strident, more projecting, glaring, and emphatic, than any mental image can represent.

Granting, then, that as I lie there on my back, absolutely alone and with my eyes shut, I have found some image sufficiently representative of the universe to be a target for my ultimate reaction to life, the question arises as to what kind of happiness I have the power of summoning up, in this stark relation of pure self to pure not-self. For it must be understood that this, and not less than this, is what real "loneliness" means. There is now, in fact, nothing in the world but my "I am I" and the universe—nothing but *this* and *that* ! The Hindoo mystic, when he reaches this point in the process of world-stripping, takes the further plunge of identifying his "I am I" with the universe. In his system, the *this* and the *that* become one. To any Nordic mind, however, it seems much wiser to keep the "this" and the "that" firmly and clearly apart, and to allow every self to satisfy its egoism by isolating itself from the universal.

But let it be understood that in this ultimate loneliness,

when we are thus lying on our bed, like an ichthyosaurus on the mud, and reducing everything to the self and the not-self, there is more in our mood, *or there must soon be more*, if we have any will at all, than simple recognition. There is, in fact, this especial kind of happiness—an emotion altogether beyond mere recognition—to which I keep reverting. One has the power of calling up this happiness by a motion of the will, a motion that needs no other presences to be there than just these two, the self and the not-self. Is it possible to indicate any actual characteristics that this feeling of happiness has—this strange, stark, solitary reciprocity, like a cold moon-shadow upon a hard white stone?

In the first place, it contains a primeval exultation in being conscious at all. For untold millions of ages there was no consciousness; and now—*Ecce, mea anima!* In the second place, there is an obscure awareness of all the banked-up and piled-up obstacles to anyone's individual happiness, with the accompanying glow proceeding from these difficulties having been overcome. In the third place, there is the belligerent, malicious, animal-at-bay spirit in our solitary self, which addresses itself to the aboriginal vein of cruelty in the universe and defies it. Something in us crouches there, like a hunted beast with its back to the wall, and challenges the universe to go on with its "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune"—challenges the universe to make it cry, "Hold, enough!"

Of course, it knows, our poor solitary ego, that the universe *could*, if it *set itself* to do so, have us howling and helpless and quite at its mercy. But a certain savage

stoicism in us seems to get a queer happiness from proving that the universe cannot reduce us to this crushed state with its bare hands. It must retreat to its deadly arsenal and come thundering back with a weapon or two more, before we draw in our flickering, snake-of-the-slime forked tongue, and hiss, "Thou hast conquered!"

In the depths of things there goes on an eternal life-and-death struggle between the lonely self and the vast not-self. The conscious defies the cause of consciousness: for what other end did it become conscious? This Promethean litany must always reverberate to one selfsame tune and words—"Thou hast given me breath; and with that breath I can defy thee!"

The strange thing about this particular *kind* of feeling—this abysmal happiness which we share with animals and birds and fishes and plants—is that we seem able to draw it forth in an intermittent magnetic flood from some cosmic depth beneath us. It is as though our merely human or animal consciousness—the ichthyosaurus-ego on its mud-bed—descended, or, shall we say, was diffused, far beyond the body lying supine on the bed—far beyond the normal circumference of our awareness of place and hour. It is as though our consciousness could draw on the consciousness of the earth our mother—nay, even of the great stellar system itself!—until we reach a point where the vast Not-Self is flung further back. We *are* the stellar "universe" when we draw on this magnetic power, and the "objective universe" of our defiance is compelled to withdraw itself to remoter coasts of existence.

Let this process continue, and what in the end we come to feel is something like this. Exulting in our loneliness, we have discovered the power of giving expression to the deeper loneliness—whereof we are a part—of the whole weight and mass of inorganic, primal “matter,” erecting its vast world’s-snake head, sullenly, from its orbic sleep, and turning its slant ambiguous eye upon the primal cause of its life ! In this mood, and in the power of this experience, our lonely ego arrives at a very peculiar ecstasy of loneliness, for it draws into itself the loneliness of the vast ethereal gulfs between the heavenly bodies, and, as though it were itself *their* spirit, it hovers in mid-space, liberated from all the vexations and humiliations of its terrestrial life. This, then, is the background of the lonely ego’s “happiness” ; and it can easily be seen how far we have travelled from the too narrowly *human* ideals of truth, beauty, goodness, heroism, and the like.

But the kind of happiness to which I keep referring as the deepest secret of life is not by any means limited to these “background” emotions. The ego has its memories of thousands upon thousands of occasions when it was thrillingly happy—happy in its ordinary earth-life, when it was not by any means lying supine upon its bed, but went to and fro over the earth. These moments of its happiness have been of great variety ; but they have not been of infinite variety. Such as they have been, they were *consciously* enjoyed ; and the memories of them, like penetrating odours rising out of the earth at the touch of rain, can be renewed in retrospect. It is the practice of what Wordsworth not

unaptly used to call "emotion remembered in tranquillity." They need not be enjoyed in any "ideal" mood of gratitude to the First Cause. They can be enjoyed to the full in a mood of defiance of the First Cause. They have, in fact, been snatched by the ego out of a life which the cruelty or carelessness of the First Cause had often rendered very unhappy.

Let us get to the bottom of this whole matter—this crucial question of our attitude to "God" or to the hypothetical cause of all life.

It was fear, in the beginning, that lodged in man's consciousness that quaint sanctimoniousness which we all suffer from when we begin to inspect our real attitude to this Power. Our secret, natural attitude is not "holy" at all. It is not grave or pious or consecrated. It is whimsical, sly, stubborn, wayward, all by turns ; it is changeable as the wind ; it is essentially *profane*. It is, indeed, the supreme intellectual event in every person's life when one first realises that one has a right to turn a careless, inquisitive, detached, unholy eye upon the whole situation.

I fancy that the comfort and spiritual support which people have derived from the concept of a vast, horribly conscious, appallingly ubiquitous Mind, stretched out like an invisibly woven cocoon round all our inmost thoughts and feelings, has been more than overbalanced by the worry and superstitious trouble the thing has caused, and the general bother of its fussy, and yet majestic, spying.

Returning, then, to my saurian "I am I," still stretched out in its early-morning contemplations, the

point we have now reached is that in addition to the primal happiness which it gets in the simple, naked relation of self to not-self, it has all the vast storehouse of its scattered memories to draw upon. Now, a vast number of these memories are miserable ; still more of them are neither exactly miserable nor exactly happy ; but some are, without doubt, *very* happy. And it must be recognised, too, that apart from occasional and fleeting memories of the past, there is also in our ichthyosaurus-ego's mind, when it wills to think about such things, its awareness of its immediate status-quo in regard to its loves and hates, in regard to its present chances of satisfying its appetites, in regard to the nature of its lair, in regard to the favour or contempt of its contemporaries, in regard to the character of the soil wherein it has made its lair, the prospects of the weather, its success or failure in its hunting, and finally, and above all, what progress it has made in its will-to-happiness and in the crafty organisation of its life to that end.

It will, of course, make a certain amount of difference whether this particular creature be masculine or feminine. If the latter, its weighing-up of its causes for self-congratulation will be a great deal more realistic, and there will be more stress laid upon the character of its present lair and of its present offspring, and much less stress upon the admiration of its neighbours and their recognition of its intellectual and acquisitive powers.

But the whole point is that if this solitary ego is wise, it will obliterate completely, now as it lies at rest, all the teasing worries of its situation. It will deliberately

concentrate its pride, its self-esteem, its life-illusion, upon the simplest of its causes for contentment. It will congratulate itself upon being alive and not dead, upon being able to move, upon having at its disposal warmth, food, and shelter. It will hold vividly before its mind the miserable luck of other ichthyosauruses who are, or who have been, deprived of these necessities. It will strip its present situation of every fretting accessory and worrying problem, and give itself up to a deep physical-psychic enjoyment of the thought of air, sun, earth, water, sky, warmth, food, amorous pleasure. It will say to itself, "I am alive and comparatively free from suffering, I am warm, I have seen the fire"; and it will allow all manner of vague, delicious feelings, emanating from certain things in its surroundings, to flow over it and make it prouder, and ever prouder, simply of being itself.

And now we must come to consider the matter of its memories. These it will winnow and purge with a concentrated effort of will, annihilating the horrible ones, obliterating the indifferent ones, and re-living the happy ones. These last are, of course, of very great variety; and the art "of being happy thinking" is to pass quickly from one very different one to another, while the stripped, solitary ego upon its bed plays with them, each in turn, and yet remains independent of them. The nicest memories of all, and the ones heaviest with the magical hoar-frost of happiness, are, it seems to me, connected with various fields and roads and houses and hillsides and valleys encountered as we went about the surface of the earth.

In every person's life there are crowds of such memories. They are not, as a rule, so much moments of direct observation or concentrated contemplation, as moments of little sideways-glimpses and marginal intimations, where Nature comes in suddenly from some familiar quarter and brings either a mock or ecstasy or a calm feeling of indescribable reassurance.

The point is that the definite *objects* which surround these feelings are much less clearly remembered than the *feelings* themselves. Nor were these objects necessarily high up or very prominent in the almanac of "spiritual values." They were not, necessarily, revelations of especial beauty or truth or goodness. They were, however, very definite types of inoffensive, sideways-flitting little things. They had a great deal in common between them ; and as one dallies with them in memory, one realises that one could, with very fair accuracy, reproduce them—reproduce, at least, the situation where and whence they arose.

A solitary ego that has been crafty and wise in the organisation of its life will have made a point of keeping a weather-eye open all the while for these particular "little things." In fact, the thrills that it has got in this way, whether they have been sudden or lingering ones, have made up the chief preoccupation of its whole life—at any rate, of those portions of its life *which it has had to itself* apart from obligation and responsibility. And of what, as my ichthyosaurus-ego lies supine on its bed, deliberately "being happy," should it think, if not of as many moments of this kind as it can possibly summon up ? One great ingredient in its solitary happiness will

be the mere fact that its will is growing steadily more efficacious in obliterating all teasing, worrying, and annoying things, and re-creating lovely, flowing, magical things. *Continuity* is the whole secret ! To have smoothed out, by constant use, those psychic grooves in one's nature along which the Will hurries, like a polished machine along a steel incline, bringing back these moments of fleeting delight, this is the great achievement.

It is not necessary to have any metaphysical theory as to what lies behind these ecstatic moments of flowing and floating happiness. It is likely enough that there is nothing behind them that could be expressed in human words. It is not necessary to discuss the question as to why they thrill us, or why *some* thrill us more than others, or what are the qualities in them that make some more easily remembered than others. The whole purpose of life is achieved when we are thrilled by any single one of them, in any place, or at any time !

Here, indeed, it were advisable to pause and consider why it is that these moments of thrilling happiness carry with them such a sense of the absolute and such a profound feeling of justification while we enjoy them. This sense of justification comes only at the actual moment. Our moral conscience is so perverted by a thousand objective rules of appropriate feeling, and our minds are so obsessed by duties of action, that if we say to ourselves, " We will now enjoy just the bare sensation of stretching our bodies and relaxing our arms and legs, and feeling what it is to be a living entity on the earth," there comes a sense of shame at our selfishness ! And yet these physical sensations can float deliciously on a

tide of consciousness that calmly and peacefully reflects what is surely the essence of the mystery of life ; and, though very personal, such sensations are not malicious to other entities, but imaginatively sympathetic.

Perhaps it is not so strange that it should have been left to a childish and simple-minded blunderer such as I am, lacking in all sense of proportion and in all sense of objective humour, to find the secret of the universe in this primitive feeling of happiness, such as fleas and worms and sparrows and rabbits and minnows and gudgeon, as well as gods and angels and saints, experience.

Jesus Christ was, in this matter, a much wiser teacher than Buddha ; and the whole tone of His teaching suggests that the secret we all crave lies in an extremely simple and totally unsophistical feeling for life as it can be felt *in itself* as it carries us along. I suspect that that mysterious emotion called “*agapè*” in the Gospels, and translated sometimes by the word “love” and sometimes by the word “charity”—that emotion which is made the basis of the Fourth Gospel—that emotion which in Dostoievsky’s prophetic vision is foreshadowed in the figure of Alyosha Karamazov—is nothing less than just this very sort of psychic-physical happiness : only, here it is turned toward human beings instead of toward Nature.

The more childish and unworldly a person’s disposition is, the more happiness he gets from such simple things as air, water, sun, earth-mould, sand, leaves, bread, butter, honey, or the still more primeval sensation of a certain delicious drowsiness in his own limbs.

This is what I mean by my recurrent image of the ichthyosaurus. What I am trying to indicate by "the ichthyosaurus-sensation" is nothing less than this simple primeval happiness in the immediate experience of being alive. To blink at that mysterious god, the sun ; to stare at that equivocal goddess, the moon ; to watch the incredible shapes of the clouds, as they pile up above the horizon ; to observe in early afternoon, a certain yellowish light upon a brick wall ; to note a certain dark-blue wave of colour, as it sinks down upon the roofs of a city after sunset ; to catch the ink-black silhouettes of bare branches against a November sky, just before the windows are lamp-lit in a roadside village ; to feel the ploughed-up earth under your feet, and a cold wet wind upon your face ; to sit over a fire of wood or of red coals, thinking the long thoughts of vague race-memories—all these things, belonging to a world of psychic-physical sensations that go back to the beginnings of consciousness, are the stuff of which the secret of life is made.

But what about the misery, what about the rankling smart of that Nessus-skin of cruel suffering under which all flesh winces and writhes ? Sometimes, when one gets a sudden bird's-eye view of all the wretchedness of sentient life, it seems as if it were a bitter mockery to speak of happiness—even the most unsophisticated happiness—as the meaning of life. But when one feels like that, one is really playing a certain false trick with one's mind. One is adding up the pain of the world like a mathematical sum.

Suffering, like happiness, is an individual thing. Like

happiness, it is a lonely thing. And, although there are very few people who would be willing to live their life over again, actually while their life *is in process of being lived* there is almost always a slight predominance of pleasure over pain. But even if we concluded that there was a predominance of pain over pleasure, it still would remain that it is in the pleasure rather than in the pain that life lifts up her tragic and tremulous countenance, and conveys the essence of her expression.

The deepest secret of the universe lies in duality, in contradiction, in the opposition of contraries. This is where so many unifying philosophies tread water in stagnant error. The subtlest reach of human metaphysic is to be found in certain gnostic sayings of Heraclitus and Hegel, wherein it is indicated that out of the conflict of Being with Not-Being the Becoming of life eternally proceeds. And if the essence of things lies in duality, in the struggle between the dynamic and the inert, between good and evil, between light and darkness, we must expect to find its conscious expression in duality too—in other words, in the psychic-physical tension of which pleasure overcomes pain, and happiness dominates unhappiness.

We are not, however, composed only of sub-human and human elements. There are also in our nature certain chords that murmur in a different tongue concerning this question of pain and pleasure. In other words, there is something in us—a faint premonition, but still something—of what might be called the super-human. We cling at present to a commercial-industrial machine, to which we owe all the necessities of our life.

When one considers how dependent we all are—especially such parasitic weaklings as artists, poets, writers, priests, philosophers—upon the hard one-track energies of the industrious producers and shrewd traders, it seems only fair to make our obeisance to enterprise, strength, and cunning, before we proceed to show the limitations of such things. If we refuse to make such an acknowledgment, if we indulge in unqualified abuse of the solid, sterling qualities upon which our very existence depends, there is a danger lest our protests, instead of representing a free, detached wisdom, should represent a weak, violent, impotent rage !

If we are not blinded by prejudice, we must confess to observing, every day, how many among the competent, energetic producers and traders are honest enough in their “ deals ” and prepared to show indulgence, at a pinch, to their less sagacious rivals. We must also confess to observing how there often radiates outward from one of these successful men a vigorous aura of general well-being, of which all sorts of weaklings, living at the circumference, so to speak, of this centre of energy get the benefit. Let us therefore make our bow to these dynamos of unsympathetic force. But at the same time let us remain devotees of happiness.

But what of those weaker and poorer even than we are ? According to what we call necessity, we stubbornly go on our way, leaving so many living consciousnesses behind us obviously suffering from various degrees of tribulation, such as, if we stopped and took the trouble to concentrate on them, we might, after repeated and

patient efforts, materially relieve. It is according to necessity, too, that we pass by the dead—pass them by, and, unless they be of our own flesh-and-blood, take small thought even so much as to bury them !

I picked up a dead frog this morning. Withered it was to a veritable husk of hollow emptiness, like a snake's skin bleached by months of burning sun. I suppose many a bird had hopped against it, brushing it with wings or tail, many a butterfly settled above it, many a rabbit spurned it with unstartled, jerky indifference. Why should they care ?

The ichthyosaurus-ego in us, however, is touched by a more vivid consciousness of the pitiful contrasts of our terrestrial lot. To its old saurian sensibilities, the basic alternations of life and death are more crucially evident than to these rabbits and birds ; and thus, to its dreaming mud-spawned mind, this feather-light, horn-coloured simulacrum in the form of a frog is something that pulls at him to pause and think. A natural instinct of self-preservation, qualified by a nervous shiver of sympathy that fades out, like a reflection of something limned in water as the sky darkens, protects the rebound of our egoism and the resilience of our life-zest when we encounter a sorry sight like this.

People tend to act automatically in thus extricating themselves from the down-drift and down-slide of a fellow-creature where gravitation toward the clay is too heavy to be borne. But the more conscious we are, the less automatic is this motion of shameless escape. We make it : but we harden our hearts quite consciously. Those who do not dislike deceiving themselves, have

at their disposal some habitual drug of thought, either religious or moral, with which they medicine the pricking of their conscience. Those who have a prejudice against self-deception, accompany this hardening process with a mental gesture of humorous shame, or a mental gesture of angry protest against "the way things are"; or they struggle to attain a certain grim detachment; or they gravely accept the situation, and, while obstinately freeing themselves from the burden, go their way with a lodged sense of inescapable guilt.

There are probably very few grown-up persons who are free from any uncomfortable shame-bruise at the back of their mind. When one remorse-throb had died away, another shrewd pinch, in quite a different quarter, begins to make itself felt. The beasts and the birds, save where their offspring are concerned, appear entirely free from this malady of pity; but nearly all men and women suffer from it, and not a few are driven to their death because of it. It is the embryo in us of something superhuman.

The situation is very complicated and goes very deep. As one grows older, one is more and more amazed at the way in which people hide up their sympathy-bruises, those treacherously insidious shiverings of moral goose-flesh, and go about their business with foreheads of brass! The idea of God is very useful in this undertaking. The idea of God is a great pity-killer. If God exists, and if everything that happens is the expression of God's will, why, then, it must be God who, because of His arbitrary fondness for *you*, and because of *your*

peculiar merits, wills that *you* should be free from suffering, and wills also that these luckless wretches, whose plight troubles you so, should suffer so abominably. A great many sympathetic people adjust their minds to the misery of others by thus invoking God. In His inscrutable wisdom God has singled out *you* for a happy lot, just as He has singled out these others for a miserable lot.

When one comes to look into it, it will be almost always found that some subtle element of self-righteousness enters into the psychic aura of nearly all rich people. God plays His part here too, suggesting to the mind of both the rich man and the poor man that there is something formidable, awful, sacrosanct, about the difference between them. But in addition to God, there exists also, in this great gulf between rich and poor, a very curious vein of sheer moral unction. A rich man's feeling of moral superiority to a poor man is one of the most singular of human illusions. It betrays itself almost without a word or a gesture.

One would have supposed that, this external difference being due to God, there would be, in place of a feeling of superiority, a sheer up-welling of simple gratitude, an innocent and childish thrill over one's good luck—the sort of feeling that lottery-winners have, or men who have been fortunate in betting, or people who have found oil or gold in their garden. Such persons—until they begin to be corrupted by the atmosphere of moral superiority in other rich people—are usually found to take the correct and philosophical view of their fortune, namely that it is a product of

three factors—a totally unpraiseworthy gift for money-making, animal perseverance, and pure luck ! All wealth beyond the necessities of life is a reward of these three elements, and thus in reality does not bring the smallest grain of civilised merit to the person who possesses it.

And one would have supposed that even when gratitude to God takes the place of gratitude to chance, a natural non-moral enjoyment of a pure treasure-trove would prevail. But not at all ! What prevails is an irrefutable sense of personal superiority.

It is very sad to contemplate such a gross intellectual blunder as this. The aristocratic claim to respect appealing to one's historical and romantic interest, and sometimes to even one's recognition of genuine refinement, is at least not an illusion. Such people have something—an air, a touch, a sensibility, a charm, an indefinable atmosphere—eminently pleasing to one's æsthetic taste. But that there should ever have been an epoch in the history of the human race when a mere instinct for crafty trading, a mere doggedness of concentration on the lowest of human aims, combined with the lottery of pure chance, should receive the highest praise from the masses of men, will scarcely be credited by intelligent people in times to come.

And what about Justice ? Justice would seem to demand that everyone should have at least the primal necessities of life in some satisfactory measure. It requires enough simple and honest hardening of one's heart to go on one's way at all in a world so full of people desperately needing help. But if the situation is

complicated by moral unction and social superiority, this honest and necessary selfishness, encouraged by Nature, grows to be covered by such thick layers of cardboard humbug, that it is hard to separate the real from the unreal. Justice is not only blindfolded : we have thrust her head into a thick sack.

The gifts required for the acquiring of large sums of money are always the lowest among human qualities. The sort of patience and perseverance that is needed is itself a monstrous perversity demanding the sacrifice of the most precious elements of happiness. There are, of course, certain technical and professional aptitudes for which large salaries are paid ; but the man who is a *genius* in science and invention is as a rule exploited by brains of the lowest order, whose object is to commercialise the values of the intellect.

In a world as industrialised and mechanised as ours, it would be for most of us a kind of pretentious child's-play to attempt to live the life of a Thoreau or a Tolstoy. Everything that supplies our needs, everything that clothes our nakedness, comes from the labour and wits of the human race ; and we all have to bear the burden and pay back what we owe to our tribe. Some sort of productive work our fellow-animals have every right to demand of us ; and it is always a nice and delicate point what degree of artistry, or entertainment, or circus-tricks, or philosophical research, or priestcraft, or medicining we are justified in cajoling them to accept in exchange for the results of their mechanical enterprise and manual labour.

It is really very questionable whether any self-respecting

person has a right to be rich ! What drives people on to aim at riches is not the desire to satisfy definite essential needs, but partly a vague panic-fear of poverty and partly the instinct of competition. Granting that the prudence and thrift and industry by which we have lifted ourselves out of fearful poverty are useful, although not heroic—granting that the chance and the luck which helped our endeavours are Powers deserving heart-felt gratitude—it still does not seem appropriate that, when we encounter such persons as have lacked such prudence—quite likely because of the possession of higher gifts—and have been neglected by the wanton spirits of chance and luck, we should assume toward them an air of superiority. In what are we superior ? These wretches are closer than we are to the bloody floor of life's great slaughter-house. In their uncertainty about food and shelter they are closer to the underlying tragedy of things. In their anxiety about their offspring, in their desperate neglect or desperate care of their parents, in the primordial value to them of food, of fire, of shelter, their life possesses the poetry of continual danger. The whole accent of it and temper of it is more vibrant than ours. Boredom is unknown to them. Fancy-maladies do not emerge. And with Death—imminent always—always with his bony fingers on lintel and sill—they are as conversant and familiar as were the Homeric heroes. To be alive at all is something to them. To be able to beg or steal enough to send them to bed warm and stupefied, is a divine interposition. To be aware that they have laid by, snugly under the floor, *enough to pay for their own coffin*, fills the

background of their consciousness with one element at least of solid, inviolable satisfaction.

Poverty is like war. It is like being at the Front. All manner of wild, strange, reckless moods, all manner of stoical endurances, all manner of monstrous outrages and crazy distractions heighten with pity and terror, and sometimes with untold relief, the passing of the days. There ought to be in every nation a great public cenotaph to *The Unknown Poor Man* ; for, since what we call our commercial civilisation connives at poverty, implies poverty, pays for itself with poverty, your poor man, employed or unemployed, does as much as any great industrial magnate to keep the machine going. He is, so to speak, the living excrement of the machine. Since its existence, grounded upon competitive struggle between vast organised interests, implies the failure and starving-out of so many small independent craftsmen, farmers, and traders, the poverty of these latter is one of the prices humanity pays for whatever prosperity it may be—and whatever amelioration it may be—that the new machine-age brings.

Thus, in the eyes of any real sage, so far from the poor man being inferior to the man who is, as the phrase runs, “ comfortably off,” *he is his superior*. Those of us born to bourgeois security, live and die—unless, out of personal adventurousness, we choose to take risks by sea or by air—in a state of being that is *one remove* from the state of Nature. Rich people, indeed, inhabit a world that is *twice removed* from such a state. And just as all women, all children, and all poets instinctively pay homage to the professional soldier as one who lives

in heroic familiarity with death, so the true philosopher instinctively pays homage to the unlucky poor man, knowing full well that by living so close to a life-and-death struggle for a bare subsistence, he shares with birds and beasts a thousand shifts and palliatives, a thousand unconscious clairvoyances and inarticulate heroisms, which have a poetry and a dignity such as nothing but that grim margin of survival that borders upon the end of man's tether has the power of bestowing.

Nor does the philosopher, in offering his homage to stark poverty, lay the least stress upon what are called merits or deserts. Here, in this tragic borderland, jostle the people who have struggled desperately and the people who have always drifted. Both are deserving of the philosophic Victoria Cross. To have struggled implies one innate type of human temperament. To have drifted implies another. But the glory and distinction of both is equal, namely their knowledge of what it means to have sunk down to bed-rock.

To the poor man and the poor woman the philosopher pays the same homage that we all, from time immemorial, pay to the dead. Just as one feels that, whatever their lives have been, we owe to our dead the mere fact that we are alive at all, so the philosopher feels that, whether deserving or undeserving, merely to be poor is a kind of consecration. It is, indeed, a state of being that ought to be treated with the same tender and superstitious reverence with which certain wise and poetic ages treated deformity and imbecility, and with which Nature herself seems to teach us to treat helpless infancy.

A true philosopher, like a true aristocrat, prefers the conversation of very poor people to any others ; and if he does not prefer their society to any others in the matter of bed and board, it is due to certain human weaknesses of his own—to his physical shrinking, for one thing, as a person who can afford good soap, hot water, and clean linen, from their sour smells and verminous rags—to his physical cowardice, for another thing, as one who finds it hard to cope with street-and-market brutality, and who becomes ill at ease in the neighbourhood of irrational physical violence.

Nature teaches us how to harden our hearts and go on our own way when by chance we encounter shocking cases of extreme poverty. It seems, however, that Nature herself is revolted by most of the forms of flattering unction with which we palliate this escape from responsibility. It is Nature that makes it seem inevitable that we should bear the burden of our offspring and, when the time comes, of our parents. But to any sensitive person who is not in want of the primal necessities of life, the thought of the sufferings—caused simply and solely by lack of money—that surround us on every side, must often present itself with appalling clearness.

One of the least satisfactory of all excuses for hardening one's heart against people poorer than oneself is the excuse that the State or the Church will look after such derelicts, or that some great charitable institution will take up the case. This excuse is an utterly hollow and conventional one. When you encounter a poor man, under-fed and under-clothed, whether it be in town or country, *you*—a lucky human animal—are

meeting *him*—an unlucky human animal. All other considerations are flimsy, irrelevant, hypocritical. *You*, well-fed and well-dressed, meet suddenly, on this Robinson-Crusoe-Island, *him*, ill-fed and ill-dressed. Automatically your selfishness calls up about twenty reasons why you should disregard his appeal, or, if he has made none, why you should not, out of a blue sky, give him a “quarter.” “He is really a miser. His appearance is a masquerade. He will only spend your money on drink. You are pauperising the populace. You are discouraging self-help. There is always the Salvation Army.” It is surprising how rapidly these arguments rush into your mind. And then a yet more specious reason against putting your hand into your pocket will leap up. “What good does it do? It is only a moment’s satisfaction to the man. It is not enough even to get him a night’s lodging.” Well, *make it enough, then!* Give him fifty cents instead of a quarter.

But what nonsense this is about its being *only* a moment’s relief! Suppose—which is by no means impossible—that your beggar really craves desperately the “cup of coffee” about which he is so obsequiously murmuring. Who are you, to despise as “nothing” the gratification of an intense, natural, human desire? Sensation is sensation. Happiness is happiness. A moment of delicious well-being is very often a revelation of eternity. What do you know, you despiser of momentary pleasure, of the metaphysic of Time? Socrates himself commented on the sublime sensation that he derived from having his chains knocked off, though he knew well enough that the next moment he must drink

the hemlock. Granting that, in this particular case, all you have done for the poor fellow is to give him his coffee, how do you know that to-morrow some other philosopher, free also from Pecksniffian moral scruple, may not encounter him and repeat the liberal alms? Thus, by hook or by crook, the poor devil may for a long while escape the outrage of official attentions.

He begs for a cup of coffee. You refuse him the price of this, thinking in your mind, "He will spend it on drink." *But what if he does?* No wonder he mentions coffee rather than ginger-beer or grape-juice. Coffee hath this in common with the nepenthe that Helen of Troy brought from Egypt and gave to Menelaus and Telemachus, that it changes a man's universe. Something inside a person swings slowly round upon a mystical pivot, and, from the new coign of vantage, "an ampler ether, a diviner air" flows down upon the comfortless world.

And if this applies to coffee, how much more to——? It may well be that many a wife's bloom and many a child's rounded contours have gone the way of all flesh down their man's throat in the form of such divine forgetfulness. But when a well-disposed person hesitates to put his hand into his pocket on such grounds, at least he should remember that the chances are in favour of the poor rogue's bachelorhood.

"He will spend it on drink?" Has it ever occurred to you to think what this "God's Earth," as the optimistic poets love to call it, really looks like from the viewpoint of a "down-and-out"? His vision of things may have its compensations, as we shall endeavour to show

presently ; but sometimes—— And all this arid desolation—all this “Terre Gastée,” or Wasteland—you have the power of transforming for him. Why, a very child would do as much for its paper-doll, if it had the power !

But in the rationalising of our selfishness we may hit upon quite a different argument—indeed, upon an opposite argument—for our refusal. We say to ourselves that a derelict’s life is so miserable a matter, that we ought not to encourage its survival ; no, not by so much as a “dime” ! But *is* it such a repulsive, such an unconscionable thing ? Its conditions are shocking enough to us—there is no mistake about that—but there are other considerations. To give money to tramps and “bums” is like giving money to disguised gods. It is the plain duty of everyone who can boast “a home.” It is *not* “encouraging idlers.” It is encouraging the highest life. It is on a par with giving alms to pilgrims or leaving offerings of food outside a hermit’s cave.

Think what a burden of possessions these lonely wayfarers have shaken off ! Money is the root of all evil : they have none. Relatives, dependents, houses and cattle, offices, shops, and investments—these are the loads that weigh a person down, and lead him to sell his very soul. *They* have none of these. What they enjoy is *the pure sensation of life*, the sort of thing that the saints are seeking. They need not consider their dignity. They need not fuss about their health. Life is always close to death with them ; and of this closeness, surely the proverb holds good, “The nearer the bone, the sweeter the

meat ! ” They enjoy habitually what so many people sigh for and never taste—a living Nirvana !

How many workers in stores and offices think to themselves of a fine morning, “ Oh, if only I had this precious day to myself ! ” Well, when they feel like this, they can at least give all their small-change to the first tramp they meet ! He will enjoy this holy day *for* them. By their patient labour they are making it possible for at least one unit of human sensibility to live that life of “ *energeia akinesis* ” which Aristotle says is the life of God.

It all depends whether freedom or security is what you desire most. Among the poor, the wastrel has the one and the store-assistant has the other. The man most to be pitied is the factory-hand with many children who obviously can *never* have freedom, and who very rarely can have security. What if he loses his job ? There’s the pinch ; there’s the bite ; there’s the sickening gnaw. To be so placed, by the way Society is organised, that your greatest desire is to be *allowed* by your fellow-creatures to spend all your days in confinement, out of the air, out of the sunshine, at some tedious drudgery. Just think what a world it is when your one great terror is to be left free and at leisure—at leisure to see your children starve !

We of the bourgeois class have not the remotest conception—unless we have run away to be “ artists ”—of what this nauseating terror of “ losing one’s job ” really means. I have just heard of a girl called Lizzie who has spent twenty-eight years in a factory—making expensive perfumes. Hers has been, she thinks, an exceptionally

lucky life. A lucky one, too, in comparison, is the life of the strong young man with the pick-axe, uncovering the water-pipes in the street. Strength is cheap to-day. But think what Strength *has* been in the history of our race. Muscles like that boy's, a figure and a balance like that boy's—all Greek art and half of Homer's poetry were dedicated to celebrating just that ! But *there* it sinks, that divine strength, trickling away in waste among inhuman machines, like the very water of life.

The great thing in this whole matter is to have a philosophic mind. In other words, whatever you are going to *do*, at least *think* in the right way ; and sweep aside all the pseudo-moral conventions that come between you and the real situation.

The real situation is simple enough. Walking about upon the surface of this planet are two sensitive human animals. Both have bodies that require "coffee" or whatever it may be that corresponds to coffee. And this satisfaction they *must* have, if they are to experience that unique sensation—not confined, I dare say, to this planet—which we call happiness. There is nothing superior to a completely satisfying sensation—unless it be a sexual or a spiritual ecstasy.

It is a monstrous impertinence when one of two mysterious perambulatory skeletons, clothed in skin and cloth, arrogates to itself the right to question the proper conviction of the other that it knows what it wants and what is good for it ! One anthropoid biped implores another to let him share something that it took three generations of their tribe to produce, namely

a cup of coffee. The fact that the one specimen of *Homo sapiens* is without a "quarter," and the other not without this, makes up, as far as the evocation of a moment's divine pleasure is concerned, the sole difference between them. The possible but not yet actual moment of exquisite felicity implied in the first skeleton's raising a cup of coffee to his lips—a moment attended by indescribable sensations of psychic well-being—is even now hovering "in vacuo," a Platonic idea of blessedness not yet embodied ! The second skeleton's privilege is to endow this insubstantial essence with palpable reality—in other words, to produce the "quarter." This precious metallic talisman, the paradisiac circle stamped with the venerated image, is his : the other lacks it. Chance alone has placed this talisman in his pocket, rather than in *his*. Chance alone gave him a careful parent, *him* a shiftless one—him a saving disposition, *him* a spendthrift one—him an acquisitive nature, *him* the reverse. The one, in his prenatal Limbo, no more asked to be born a drifting Jack, than the other asked to be born a prudent Sir John.

As wise men, we have all practised for ourselves the mysterious power that is called "will" ; but as philosophers we are not ignorant of the formidable power of fate and chance. Suppose it be you, gentle reader, that is now face to face with this luckless bum. Two conscious minds, two palpable bodies, two organic centres of quivering sensibility ! It has taken some thousands of millions of cosmic years to produce you both, out of whirling agglomerations of gaseous nebulae. Planetary processes have evolved you both, such as know

nothing of the grave economic reasons that make you an important personage, and make him far less valuable than a well-bred dog. As a sagacious man, you have used the world as it is to your own advantage ; but as a philosopher you have the power of detaching yourself from these too-human illusions. You have the power of seeing nothing but the evolutionary miracle of a real living specimen of *Homo sapiens*, standing before you, a specimen of the incredible miracle of human consciousness at this moment gazing round in astonishment and in protest at a universe composed of so few things that minister to its enjoyment.

Let us suppose the philosophy in you overcomes for a while that natural and necessary hardening of your heart, without which—unless you are trying to be a saint—you cannot live your life. You give him fifty cents, let us say, and when you have left him you imagine as well as you can what follows. You imagine his entering an eating-house, humble enough to have a stove, or a fire of some sort, at which he can sit while his cup of coffee and his bacon-and-eggs are preparing. You imagine him contemplating the flames of this fire. And there comes over you that mysterious, hypnotic sense of the old fire-ritual of the “ dark backward and abysm of time ” whereby the tribes of men of your blood worshipped their gods.

Would the original cave-man, who first stumbled upon fire—that anonymous Prometheus—be able to understand these subtle economic differences that make this occasion a mere whimsey to you and an unforgettable oasis of relief to your companion ? Were this

man a shipwrecked stranger, were he staring at a fire of driftwood on an unknown shore, how different everything would be ! How different the whole psychic atmosphere would be ! And yet it is only a flimsy screen of unreal modern customs—totally devoid of philosophic reality—that separates this situation from the other.

An anthropoid figure, muttering various symbolic sounds, sits warming his hands over this yellow flame. Old as all human poetry is this fire at which the man to whom you have given a meal warms his hands. No other flame than this licked the lovely flesh from the bones of that "sweet war-man" Hector ! No other flame than this flame burned bright and tragical in the high watch-tower of Ariadne ! And yet the chances are that this protégé of yours, before many days have passed, will be beaten nigh to death by a certain set of men called "Policemen," whose inexplicable brutality, to persons as helpless and comparatively harmless as he is, remains one of the terrible mysteries of life.

But meanwhile, while he waits for his bacon-and-eggs, and while the woman of the place brings him slices of bread and little pats of butter, you may well enjoy the thought of that bread, the oldest—after meat and milk and wine—of all human sustenance, being eaten by a specimen of *Homo sapiens*. Bread ? In the Orphic and Eleusinian ritual it is likely enough that they ate the god of all life and all death in the form of bread ! It is very doubtful, supposing it were possible for one of the old priestly celebrants of that heathen sacrament to set eyes at this moment on this man,

whether he would understand the great gulf that divides this poor guest from his entertainer ! But you might make him understand—if you explained that to-morrow, about this time, should our friend, remembering with reckless desire the taste of this coffee, be caught snatching a trinket out of the jeweller's window next door, his lot would be almost as bad as if he were Dionysus in the hands of Pentheus. To the contemplative mind of our Eleusinian priest there might be something monstrous in the idea of silly shops being full of trinkets and meaningless frippery, when actual living sons of the gods could not procure so much as the flesh of swine.

It is this accursed human meanness and contemptible vanity, far more removed from real primeval goodness than are the simple virtues of dogs and horses, that makes it possible for our minds to have got so perverted, that we can go on buying frippery in these jewellery-shops, while *we know* that a street or two away there is a bread-line of some five hundred yards.

Here is something worse than that dead husk of a frog about which the hedge-sparrows hopped so merrily. Here are thousands of living, empty, anthropoid bellies. And instead of rushing to give these people money wherewith to buy food, we just go on about our business, with a visit or two to the jewellery-shop between-whiles, to brighten things up !

The ichthyosaurus-ego in us is as disgusted with this "hard-boiled" humanity of ours as is the dim, far-off godhead in us—that premonition of something that will eventually surpass humanity. And well does humanity

deserve to be surpassed, when it is content to be led and ordered about by the kind of jackals, masquerading as lions, who are its present rulers, and when it can see these bread-lines and go on buying its glittering rubbish.

We are not all born to be saints. But it is something if we can see our unmerited luck in being saved from destitution in its proper light, and deal—a little, at any rate—in what the moralists call “indiscriminate charity.” No, not many of us are born to be saints. But it is the saints alone that enjoy that lovely, magical flowing sensation *of being free from remorse*. The rest of us, say what you please, below our excitements and distractions, carry a deep wedge of rankling shame, a queer dark wedge, like a vulture’s beak, in the very midriff of our being. Months may pass without our being conscious of this at all. But sooner or later we feel it again, down there in the very centre of our midriff. Of its character there can be no doubt. It is like the tooth of that “agenbite of inwit” referred to by James Joyce ; only it has a different cause. *Our* remorse is not turned toward an outraged mother. It is turned toward all the people in the world against whose weakness and suffering and poverty we have hardened our hearts, as we went on our way. Months may pass without our feeling it. But it always comes back.

Its gnawing-place has a thick, rusty-coloured pulse-throb in it that seems to spring from that unknown portion of our identity where our body and our spirit mingle with each other. Action deadens it, enjoyment drugs it, love lulls it, work dulls it, anxiety covers it up, pain numbs it ; but always, in some glacier-crack of the

cold night, in some slippery mine-shaft of the hot noon, this devil's-drum begins beating again. It is the secret umbilical cord that connects our personal good luck with the ill-luck of all the other sentiencies. It is the scream of the victim in the hands of the police, it is the starvation-groan of the famished, it is the weeping of the lynched, it is the howl of the executed, it is the inert despair of the jobless ; it is, in one word, the ghastly universal pinch of the claws of Cancer, the world-crab!

The saint alone is free from this pulse-beat of dark remorse—from this sense of being responsible for the cruelty in the system of things. He is free from it because he has never hardened his heart. To *all* appeals, spoken or unspoken, of *all* the quivering nerves he ever encounters, he responds at once. His whole life is one continuous response to just these very appeals. Any money he may get hold of, any food, fire, or shelter he may possess, he regards as something to be shared—to be shared at once and as completely as possible.

It is a great mistake to think that the condition of being a saint depends on any definite religious belief. It does not even depend on believing in God. It does not at all imply any rigid morality. The saint is always very lenient to every kind of sex-sensation. The condition of being a saint implies in the first place a passionate faith in the possibility of a certain kind of thrilling happiness. The saint is one who holds the view that compared with happiness nothing is of any importance at all. Compared with happiness, fame is nothing, ambition is nothing, work is nothing, progress is nothing. But this happiness which the saint sets about

to evoke—first for others, then for himself—is not the same thing as excitement or pleasure. It is a calm, deep-flowing satisfaction, mounting up at intervals into tidal waves of quivering ecstasy.

Different saints have different degrees, qualities, accents, atmospheres of happiness. But they all agree in this, that the divine feeling depends more upon oneself than upon any outward circumstance. Poverty, cold, thirst, hunger, pain, ugliness, disgust, ill-health, can of course temper it and diminish it. But with these positive causes of suffering momentarily relieved, it is always ready to pour through the senses like an irresistible flood, ready to soothe the nerves, calm the intellect, transport the spirit. The saint has no desire to build up any particular kind of character. All he wants to do is to remove from people's lives those definite causes—material, physical, or nervous—which prevent this magnetic wave of happiness from flowing through them.

II

Well, let us return to the question of happiness, and leave the saint for a while.

In the process by which happiness is produced, the first step is ridiculously simple, namely the determination of the person himself to be happy at all costs, whether external conditions are changed or not. Whatever this happiness of his may be, he accepts it as the ultimate secret of the universe. But, where his predecessors in the wisdom of heaven labelled it by such names as "God," "Eternity," "Immortality," and the like, he contents himself with opening up the psychological river-gate by which the waters enter! He is not oblivious to the mysterious overtones that accompany these motions of the sacred fount. He has found for himself—he has noted in others—that side by side with the sensuous thrill of these moments there comes a strange spiritual feeling of creative achievement, as if the mere fact of being the recipient of such an inflowing were something that carried forward the hidden purposes of the universe.

In place, therefore, of regarding the moral poise and dignity and self-restraint of a human being as the important thing—still less, his capacity for accumulating property—our modern saint, like the Chinese Taoists and the old Quakers, finds in a certain mystical quietism—a quietism that makes use of various simple

external objects as the lodestones of its subjective vibrations—the chief clue to the secret of life.

Until some very enlightened philosophic rulers come to dominate humanity, it looks as if the present régime of competitive industrialism could be triumphantly dealt with only by the sort of person I have defined as the modern saint. Triumphantly—but, in certain human aspects, I dare say, tragically too ! I suppose such a one would feel it incumbent upon him to take his share in keeping the great, formidable, productive machine going ; but, short of this, he would certainly obtain his own happiness from the minimum of private possessions.

But his chief peculiarity would always be discovered in the matter of the less fortunate. He would perpetually resist the stark incentives of Nature, so grimly voluble, to harden his heart as he goes his way. He being a *modern* saint, the value of money as one of the infallible medicines for human suffering would never be far from his mind. Swiftly and gladly would he snatch at it at every opportunity, in order to apply it—as the only *Æsculapian nepenthe*—to all the sores and hurts of the deserving and the undeserving. Had he a chance of becoming a millionaire, he would surely not reject such a rôle : but they would be sharp eyes that could detect any change in his own personal existence. Luxury and large possessions would be as distasteful to him as meat to an ox, or ice to a fish. In order to breathe the quiet air of his own happiness, he would be driven by a resistless urge to surround himself with nothing but the simplest things. And since he would be for ever

giving away all that came in, and keeping back nothing but the bare primal necessities, his inmost life would be free from that deep intermittent remorse which dogs, like a devilish werewolf, the tranquillity of the rest of us.

Nature teaches us to harden our hearts and go upon our way ignoring the horrors—yes, ignoring them as completely as those birds, hopping about in the grass, ignored that dead frog—or a fish, darting between the weeds, ignores a dying sheep on the bank ! Whence, then, does the saint draw his inspiration for this attitude of his which is so contrary to Nature ? Whence comes to his mind all this mysterious whisper, bidding him refrain from hardening his heart, as the rank-and-file of humanity do, so naturally, so easily ? In his little, simple, sensuous pleasures, the saint is no different from the rest of us. He differs, indeed, from the cruel, evil-minded Puritan, in the fact that he does not regard sex-sensation as wrong, and is always indulgent to it in others, and not very shocked by it even in himself.

But whence comes to his mind at all this mysterious whisper, bidding him not to rest until he has fed someone who wants food, or given away money to someone who wants money ? Whence comes to his mind this utterly non-human notion, contradicting completely every tradition of our human feelings—our insect-thrift, our insect-economies, our insect-meanness, our insect-envy, our insect-malice, our insect-hatred of the idle, the helpless, the undeserving ? Oh, how closely does humanity in a great city, in its organised, vicious society-habits, resemble the work-besotted ants, bustling

about in their contemptible ant-hill ! Whence, I repeat, comes into the saint's mind his sublime contempt—not so much for the impurities and obscenities of humanity, for the saint, unlike the moralist, is very indulgent to these—but for the thrifty selfishness of us all ? Whence comes into the saint's mind this inhuman, non-human, unnatural feeling, in which he disregards the ordinary ways of men and actually prefers giving gifts and giving courteous attention rather to the undeserving than to the deserving ? Whence comes this strange, monstrous, abnormal obliquity in the saint ? Does it not come into his mind *from the future*—that is to say, is it not a mysterious “entelecheia” or premonitory rumour of a non-human, godlike state of being, in which humanity will be merged, lost, surpassed ?

The blind hatred which the saint, more than anyone else, excites in the hearts of ordinary human beings, is an undeniable evidence of what I am saying. The saint has a deep, unbounded contempt for “Property,” that great idol of Humanity. To “Property” he always prefers Life. Life is sacred to him ; Property negligible. This clash between Humanity and the saint is as formidable, as heavy with fatality, as desperate and deep, as the kindred clash between Humanity and the ichthyosaurus-ego, or what in us reverts back and back, to the peaceful goodness of rocks, stones, trees and slow-worms.

Here we reach the crux of the whole matter and the main theme of this book. Human nature—this gregarious thing of false idealism, savage cruelty, and mean, acquisitive greed—lies in every individual

midway between the life of the plants and the life of the gods. In the ichthyosaurus-ego, in all of us, we revert to the life of the plants. In those faint feelings by which, in all of us, we approximate to the emotions of the saint, what we really have is a premonition of that future state of being when men shall have become as gods.

And here I touch the question of the quality of happiness. It is my opinion that the most rapturous feelings of happiness we experience come rather from these two extremes of our nature—the ichthyosaurus-extreme and the saintly extreme—than from the hot, feverish, fussy, agitated, possessive, competitive middle-distance, where the gregarious instincts of normal humanity predominate. And my main argument reaches its climax here, that the pursuit of this ecstatic happiness, to reach which both extremes of our nature have to play their part, without being at all moderated into any “golden mean,” is still a kind of continual, unwearied warfare. Happiness is not a feverish pleasure. It is a peaceful rapture. But it can be obtained only by continually fighting for it, and by the stoical endurance of the innumerable annoyances that would spoil it. We have to fight for happiness and we have to endure for happiness. But, above all, we have deliberately to *aim* at happiness. Very few people do any of these things, and that is why the faces in our streets are so unhappy. Every soul among us knows something of both the vegetative-saurian extreme of our being, and of the saintly extreme.

Each of these extremes comes to us in vague, sweet, floating, dreamy waves of feeling ; and in both cases we

have to be passive rather than active to receive them. But our mental warfare consists in previous battles to reach and maintain this passivity. The ichthyosaurus-ego has to be active when it seeks its food, and the saintly ego when it seeks to alleviate the hunger of others ; but the Beatific Vision of the saint comes from contemplation, not action, and the ecstasy of the ichthyosaurus comes from lying back upon the universe. It is the humanity in us, never allowing us to rest, that kills our happiness with responsibility, with envy, with hatred, with avarice, with selfish ambition, with troubled and restless striving after what we call success. Lovely and indescribable are the feelings that come and go in the awareness of the saint in us. They are rumours, and abandonments, and mysteries, syllabled backwards, to the ears of our tense expectation, from the as-yet-nonexistent future. Almost always these high, vague, sweet, indescribable feelings come to the saint in moments of little, simple, sensuous impressions. But what really are they ? They are the premonitions of that dim, godlike state of Being which eventually will take the place of humanity.

Now, it is clear that all the ordinary ideals of humanity lie between these extreme points of sanctity and vegetation. That is why it is so necessary to keep them in their place ; and, to speak grossly, to squeeze them out between the millstone of earth-dreaming and the millstone of godlike dreaming. The whole of our modern life is organised on an economic basis. The life I am advocating in this book obeys this law, for we all must live ; but it refuses to accept economic pressure

as the last word of wisdom. We must pay what we owe to humanity. One thing we do not owe to anyone, and that is our living soul. And this living soul in us lives on the nourishment of little, simple sensations, and on a secret art of being passive. This secret art means a constant war upon the superficial aspects of our machine-civilisation and upon the clumsy tyranny of the ant-heap.

Consider a man in an office—any ordinary office. He is seated at his desk, in his shirt-sleeves, in an atmosphere polluted by human breath, and he is copying out, at the dictation of his employer, an advertisement of his business. Suddenly, as he pauses, pen in hand, the memory of a particular spot in a country-road where he walked last Sunday comes into his head, and a delicious rapture floods his whole being. It is a feeling that transfigures his desk, his colleagues, his employer. It flows through that office like waves of an ichor far more magical than liquid sunlight. Now, if at this moment his employer had scolded him for inattention, or he had remembered a scolding in the morning which he had had from his wife, his mental response to both these would be a whimsical, ironical submission ; but in his heart not for one second would he renounce this sweet, furtive, dreamy ecstasy, wherein the feelings of the ichthyosaurus mingle with the feelings of the saint.

It is by feeling Life and by embracing Life in both these extremes that we arrive at happiness ; for although the breath of the spirit of the saint may blow seldom upon us, it leaves behind it its air-tracks after

it has gone, invisible, but to be distinctly felt. And these air-tracks are prophecies of a godlike future, that, from the as-yet-unborn, reach us in certain moments of receptive sensuous dreaming. To crowd out the merely human—the hot, feverish, spiteful, acquisitive, active human—and make room for the vegetative and for the godlike, this is the path to the particular vision of things that I am advocating.

But not to have enough to eat—that is a state that makes every philosopher look a little wry and a little confused ! Why should one man have food and another man not have food ? On this matter, the philosopher, no less than the saint, refuses to fool himself with phrases of pompous unction. But unlike the saint, he does not share his substance with *every* poor man he meets. The philosopher does not forget his own belly. Hobbididance cries therein for many a tasty red herring ! But while he follows the path of sly self-interest in this, he never permits his recognition of the ghastly difference between the lot of the rich man and the poor man to be confused by any other issue than that of pure good-luck and pure ill-luck. Thus no poor man ever sees in the dazed eyes of the philosopher that monstrous outrage of the illusion of biological superiority which resembles a stinging slap on the cheek delivered with the back of a contemptuous hand.

But once more let us reiterate the question, Whence comes this non-human imperative against hardening the heart ? By the eternal antinomy of all existence, it comes *forward* from a remote Past, older than Stonehenge, and *backwards* from a yet remoter Future !

Yes, there we reach the crux, the rub, the very central knot of the mystery ! For the feelings of this non-human amphibium are quite different from the feelings that make ordinary humanity struggle for their offspring and their mates. This queer two-natured monster feels pity for the hurts of complete outsiders. This madman gets more pleasure from giving money to the undeserving than from hoarding it up for the deserving !

What has brought this feeling into the world, and when did it first appear—this feeling that leads to behaviour so contrary to natural laws ? This is a question that the ichthyosaurus half-god cannot answer. The philosopher explains it as “ an extension of the offspring-and-mate emotion,” diffused at large among complete strangers—diffused in fact so wide, as, finally, to include the animal and even the vegetable world !

But one cannot help fancying that the inexplicable urge that dominates this creature’s odd behaviour does not correspond to anything in the least resembling this explanation of the philosopher. One cannot help fancying that what this reptilian demigod vaguely feels—putting “ God ” and “ Immortality ” quite aside—is that two utterly different worlds, with different values and different laws and different magnetic currents, exist parallel with what we call Human Nature, and every now and then burst out, so as to speak, and fling forth, in unpredictable spouts and jets, their finer essences among our familiar elements.

Yes, one can sympathise with the saint’s madness—at any rate with less difficulty—if one thinks of his consciousness as being in intermittent *rapport* with one of

these two remote worlds, and able at intervals to draw from it certain magnetic impulses that are natural and native *there*, but disturbing, and in some ways *impossible*, here.

We are at present concerned with this two-natured monster in its extraordinary behaviour (and with the inner feeling that prompts it) only so far as money is concerned. And one is tempted to feel that a quite ordinary person might appropriate something of this habit without anything more than the vaguest inkling of the underlying double inspiration upon which it really depends. In fact, in any ordinary case, short of squandering one's income, one's salary, one's wages, to the verge of economic disaster, there is a considerable margin, in every person's budget, that can either be spent on personal luxury or simply given away. Granting that one decides in favour of giving away, the point I am trying to make here is that neither the philosopher nor the saint would raise any question as to the merit of the person to whom the money is given. From the point of view of both these authorities it will be enough if *you* get the happiness of giving, and someone else of receiving.

It is to another type of authority altogether—to the doctor, to the priest, to the mother of many children—that we must go to find out where money can be most wisely, most safely, most productively lavished.

Up and down over the face of the earth move the upright bipeds that are our fellows in the mad experience of having been born. A vast inscrutable pressure drives them on, drives them on all alike, year after

year, from cradle to grave. All our tragic and pitiful situations, among which the difference between easy comfort and wretched poverty is the most poignant, are due to blunders, ignorances, cruelties, oppressions, that are detailed outrages of our unsympathetic fate. But following upon fate, entering our arena from some completely unsuspected quarter, comes Chance, the most wonderful, the most powerful of all the gods ! When you consider the part played by these two—by fate and by chance—upon the lives of men, it requires a good deal of iron in your nature to gather yourself together to be independent of them both, to defy them both, to order your days (the day of your death, peradventure, also !) in obstinate detachment from them both !

“ What,” the superstitious will cry, “ independently of both fate and chance ? ” Yes ! And not only independently of fate and chance : independently too of a power from which you may have suffered far more intimately than from either of these—the destiny of your own character ! For it does seem as if it were possible, even in the midst of a panic about money, even in the throes of physical suffering, even, perhaps, in the hands of the police or of the lynchers, to call up something within you, something that is not the same as the irony of the philosopher, something that does not come from reason, but from levels in yourself that draw upon both Past and Future—and in the strength of this to gasp out a blood-wet, fire-scorched defiance of the tyrant-devils who masquerade in the flesh-and-blood of humanity !

But the worst of poverty is, that by devitalising the

blood it lessens our power of sinking into ourselves with any formidable effect. Poverty clings to the limbs of life as barnacles cling to the keels of far-voyaging ships. Fate is against the poor man in all outward things. Destiny is against the poor man in his inmost character. Oh, it is Chance alone, great, careless, wanton goddess, like Henry Adams's Lady of Chartres, interrupting with feminine indulgence the legal decrees of the Holy Trinity, who comes to the poor man's help.

But not very often. How many times does the poor man pray in vain for Her coming ! What churches to Her does he build in the air ! What heavenly dreams does he have of Her—of *that face*, which alone, among all the celestial and infernal Powers, is ready to shine upon him and bring him peace ! Against all the economic and scientific theories in the world, the old fairy-tales and nursery-tales of our race revel in Her sweet arbitraments, those mischievous interruptions of meritorious careers, those wanton rewardings of weaklings, abjects, and wasters !

The wickedest words in the philosophic vocabulary are the words " heredity " and " environment." They are words coined by good, angry men in their hours of bleak despair. In the real chaos of things—ay, but how many other influences are at work !—there is the Pure Reason of the philosopher. There is the " Other World "—the " Parallel World "—of the mystic. And there is that indescribable level of mysterious Life-in-Death which we can draw upon in the depths of our own being. All these potencies play havoc with " heredity " and " environment."

Who are they that are always and without fail the best friends to the poor ? There is only one answer to this, and it is simple enough—*the other poor*. Yes, more than all the philosophers, philanthropists, priests, publicists in the world, it is the poor who help the poor. To the bourgeois mind it is incredible what they will do for one another. A fine fuss we bourgeois writers would make, if night after night (and after a hard day's manual work, too) we sat up with a sick or dying neighbour ! A mighty song we would sing, if our women-folk snatched away our very supper from before our nose, to share it with a casual roomful of famished children next door ! But the poor do this sort of thing *all the while*. Only those of us who know them well and have lived very close to them realise this unconscious heroism of theirs. Employers and the like, charity-officials and the like, see their worst side. Those who see what they really are, are their neighbours. The freemasonry among the very poor, their kindliness to one another, is one of those inscrutable, absolute phenomena which redeem human existence.

But, after all, even apart from his fellow-victims the poor man *has* his friends. The philanthropist is one of these. The philanthropist has done and *can* do much. The saint, the artist, the philosopher, are all—when at the height of their vision—on the poor man's side. Even the much-abused revolutionary has given the poor man intoxicating hours—yes, and years too—of sacred self-respect. The mild-natured, theory-loving liberal himself has probably played a greater part in the long struggle, *and will play it still*, than people nowadays are

willing to allow. It seems likely, however, when the bed-rock truth is spoken, that even under the most just and most scientific régime that could be imagined, there will be congenital poor men—odd fish, misfits, derelicts, reversions—upon whom the energetic champions of economic hygiene will *look down*—if they don't do worse with their despotic scientific inquisitions—with the same old look of outrage that resembles a slap on the cheek by the back of an insolent hand. The deepest, truest, most unswerving friends that the poor man has, of every shade of opinion and under every régime and every government, are for ever in danger of being mobbed by the healthy-minded adherents of *That Which Is*.

Yes, there is something about the intransigent friend of the poor man that excites blind fury in the nerves of average humanity. There is, indeed, a secret great interest in this. What it really is, is the deep guilt—which we all feel—asserting itself in an inverted way. And it needs the innocence of youth to resist this sinister hatred. All the way down the ages the lovers of the poor man have been done to death in their youth. One never meets an *old saint*. That type of person almost invariably dies young. Old revolutionaries, unless in more or less contented exile, are also rare. Philanthropists, on the contrary, often die old, and in their beds too. But then, after all, the philanthropy of most of us is not a violent emotion. It is a sort of sop, doled out to the gnawing Cerberus of our conscience, and is far more likely to improve our health than to impair it !

No, normal human tradition teaches us to pass by both the dying sheep and the dead frog. It takes some

years, however, for youth to learn this "*Realpolitik*" of the stellar system. Hamlet says that conscience "doth make cowards of us all." Alas, the truth is the opposite of this ! It is the old hungry human terror in us, growing stronger and stronger as we get older, that finally disposes of conscience ! "'Tis panic that kills conscience in us all." Yes, the panic-fear of coming to be one of those poor people against whom we are for ever hardening our hearts, has far more than any moderate counsels or any mature wisdom to do with our dislike of giving away money.

There was a Lover of the poor man once who uttered the sublime words, when the Lynchers killed him, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do !" Some have deduced from this saying that to sin in ignorance is more pardonable than to sin with full consciousness. Surely this is the opposite of the truth ! It is far better to do wrong *knowing that it is wrong*, saying to yourself that it is wrong, than to go lumbering on in your bad behaviour thinking that all is well ! It is much more pardonable to "sin against the light" than to sin in unbroken darkness. Complete consciousness is the great thing—to know what you are doing, even if you find the remorse heavy and yet cannot do otherwise.

There must, of course, come a point where your consciousness, however concentrated and vivid, is baffled by the simple obscurity of Nature herself. But this point, this borderland, should be most thoroughly illuminated by the searchlight of your introspection before it trails away into unfathomable darkness. Thus,

in the matter of poor people, the great thing is not to deceive yourself—not to take the obvious status-quo for granted. Because your motives are obscure, even to yourself, is no reason for going ahead with the fatuous stupidity of a sheep with a blank black face. Never mind what your noble family was or who your gifted father is ! There is no earthly reason, beyond the merest luck, why you should be well-fed and Mr. Steinmetz or Mr. Frogstad wait in the bread-line !

We ought never to set eyes on any bread-line without a sense of sickening guilt. If the town we lived in were a desert island upon which we had all been cast from a wreck, do you suppose we would think it right to conceal from Mr. Steinmetz and Mr. Frogstad that good round of salt-beef which chance has thrown in our way ? Or, if we were all survivors of a great bloody battle, that has now retreated far over the hills, would we think it right to conceal from Mr. S. and Mr. F.—*even if they were enemies*—this good bottle of Hollands Gin with which our parents' foresight had provided us ? Where, to a philosophic eye, lies the difference between this big town we live in and such a desert island or such a battlefield ? Does the fact that we've dwelt in the immediate neighbourhood of Mr. S. and Mr. F., not for three weeks or for three months, *but all our lives*, turn these human beings into wood or stone—into mannikins of lath and plaster ?

The most honest thing to do is to face our human selfishness to the very dregs. We are not fish ; we are not foxes ; we are not sheep. We are worse. We are men. We have a little less greediness and a little more

sympathy than Leghorn fowls. Perhaps when once we have had the grand "ichthyosaurus half-god" revelation that between two Beings in the shape of Forked Radishes—covered with the same sensitive flesh, carrying the same brittle bones, and able to open their mouths in the same blessing and cursing of the same First Cause—this illusory difference of position and merit amounts to no more than a rent in a crow's wing or a scar on a snake's back, there may be more "yield" and more "give" in our habitual behaviour. There will, we need not fear, always remain the ticklish point at which Nature and Necessity help us to harden our hearts and get along somehow. But between those who take it all for granted and those who cannot, there must, after all, be *some* difference ! And this difference—who knows ?—may not be overlooked by the spirits of the Fourth Dimension !

What we tend to forget is that the whole situation is entirely a matter of human custom, and that the particular human customs we are confronted by just now are by no means the best that could have grown up. Such as they are, however, unless our revolutionary hopes are more powerful than I expect they can be, we must make the best of them.

What we have to do is to regard a weak, lazy, thriftless, feeble, unreliable, unemployable individual as a creation of miraculous qualities and mysterious and godlike interest. We have to regard him as far more precious than the most expensive bric-à-brac or the rarest orchids. And even if he spends what we give him on getting drunk, we have to regard the dreams of his

that nothing in the world that could happen could bring as much delight as this moment has brought.

But note how non-human every element of his rapture is. He is, above all, unspeakably glad that he has the pavement all to himself. What gross misanthropy ! And he is, we must confess it, profoundly misanthropic.

Now, imagine our man to be ill-dressed, and imagine that he has to pass, in his wanderings, one of those gigantic individuals who stand outside large apartment-houses. How that haughty, supercilious fellow will stare at him and loathe him—loathe him with that especial loathing of pampered servants for the free, untrammelled wanderer !

It is in the social contempt of this foolish ruffian that one can find a perfect epitome of that sneering, jibing, grinning facetiousness which humanity calls “ a sense of humour.” This accursed “ sense of humour,” if our happy solitary person called it up in himself, would at once destroy his delight.

This “ human humour ” is totally different from that deliciously *physical* feeling of being a clown, a zany, a mime, such as Charlie Chaplin excels in. Such beautiful clown-consciousness is a lonely, non-human, misanthropic thing, like the humour of a doll or a scarecrow. The masochistic fury with which an inspired clown rushes into the *mêlée* of hard knocks betrays not a love of humanity, but a hatred for humanity, the sort of ironic hatred that Watteau—that enchanted dreamer, that Rousseauish introvert—puts into the very garments

of his white-frocked Pierrot ! The Fool in *King Lear* is the extreme opposite of the jesting Normal Man.

The human humour that spoils the happiness of life is the humour of the ant-heap. Oh, how well one knows it ! Any fantastic emotion, any lonely sensation, any mystical contemplation is subjected to a humorous comparison with the fussy, spiteful, gregarious philistinism of the worst sort of worldly activity. And this sort of human humour, jeering at one's own secret happiness, must be entirely killed in oneself if one desires to know the Beatific Vision. It is this sort of thing that the jesting professorial Pilates pretend to discover in Rabelais, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Sterne, and Lamb ; whereas all these great humorists, although more indulgent to humanity than an owl or a stone or a tree-root might be, are compact of vegetative irresponsibility and non-human fantasy that beautifully illustrates my doctrine of the earthy and the godlike.

My imaginary man, enjoying his lonely expanse of sunlit pavement, is thrilled with an inordinate sensation of individual pride. " But of what is he proud ? " the jeering doorman would think. " Has he ' succeeded,' has he ' made good,' in politics, business, art, literature, love ? " No, he has completely failed—she has completely failed—in all these things. He is striding like this, and rubbing his hands like this, simply out of pure life-ecstasy. He is, in fact, a megalomaniac of life-sensation. He is infinitely proud of being just what he is, a human-animal-vegetable biped, walking on the surface of the earth and staring up at the sun.

supernatural dark-blue light that fills the sky, they are ravishing Life at its source. They are standing alone between the Earth and the First Cause. What do they want, at such a moment as this, with all the hot, fussy, gregarious friendships of the gross human world ?

Such lonely ones, living a secret existence of one intoxicated life-trance after another, are not bound to reveal their thoughts to their casual friends. Let them agree with everything their acquaintance utters, so as to come to the real point—namely, *Do I want money from you ?* or, the other way round, *Do you want money from me ?*—as quickly as possible, and then good-bye ! When John Keats cried out, “ O for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts ! ” he was giving expression to the “ ichthyosaurus half-god ” ego in him. All sensuous moments, all divine moments occur in solitude and silence—except in the single case of exchanging ideas with anyone you have singled out to love. And in *that* one exception it is in the silences that follow the words, where the countenance is illuminated and the eyes wet with tears, rather than in the words themselves, that the ecstasy is consummated, and between the “ good ” in the twi-natured First Cause and the “ good ” in each of the excited interlocutors a cosmic *rapproch* is reached.

Life is far too precious a thing, far too short a thing, to waste it on acquaintances. But there is no need to be unkind. Propitiate all living creatures. Be reverential and considerate to all living things, human and non-human. Visit the grave of someone who is dead, every

day. Remember that human beings have the power of creating a sort of half-consciousness in dolls and in stuffed birds and in other so-called "inanimate" things. Be *religious* in the only real, deep sense. That is to say, indulge fetish-worship to the extremist limit. Thus in your imaginative life the beast-gods of the remote Past will beckon to the beyond-human gods of the remote Future.

Reverence for all life is the basis of the *ethics* of the "ichthyosaurus half-god" ego. Between such a one and any dying leaf dropped in the gutter, or any deserted and broken object that has been endowed with an obscure half-life by the unconscious creative "aura" of the human touch, there is a magnetic link. Thus it may well be said, as Apuleius maintained, that the world is full of dethroned and bewitched and abject little gods. The world is pluralistic and full of magic ; and it is a grievous mistake, and one of the chief and most obstinate causes of man's present misery, that people have given up polytheism. Not to worship the sun and moon and earth and sea, and each one of the planets and stars, is to make a pompous ass of yourself. They are all gods *and they can all answer prayers*. The Chinese are very wise to pray to their dead. That they do this is one of the reasons why they are the happiest of all the races. Every living soul, if it cares to demand it, can have a guardian spirit among the dead. And this can be made true *even if there is no conscious life after death*. There are a great many more forces at work than the merely conscious ones. Our attitude toward the First Cause need not be religious. It *ought not* to be so,

unless we are consciously forgetting the evil side of this Ultimate Being and thinking only of its good side. It is best to worship the "little gods" and defy the First Cause. Thus, what we should really aim at is to become idolaters. The essence of poetry is idolatry. Our modern machine-made misery comes from the fact that we shrink from natural idolatry. It has become a moral compulsion with us to shrink from this—to be what is considered "reasonable" is the new-fangled fashion. Such arid and lifeless "rationality" is far more removed from the real secret of life than the craziest superstition.

I have said all along that in maintaining that somewhere in the feeling of happiness lies the clue to the cosmos, we must take note of the *quality* as well as of the *quantity* of the feeling we speak of. Human speech is so loose a thing that we have come to use the word "happiness" when we mean a great many very different feelings. What I am trying to isolate and emphasise here is a very definite and particular kind of happiness, possessing a quality entirely unique. One element in this quality is the glow—and the afterglow too—*of battle*. We are not only happy because we are thrilled by the contemplation of a branch against the sky, or a range of hills against the horizon, or by the stimulus of a cup of coffee, or by the exquisite sweetness of bread-and-honey, or by the magic of an amorous embrace ; we are also happy because, in the immediate consciousness of the pleasure we derive from these things, we get the glow of victory. Life in us at these moments overcomes Death ; good overcomes evil.

But the whole matter of the metaphysic of happiness goes much deeper than this. One is tempted to believe that the moment when any physical sensation—a cow eating grass, two lovers clasping each other, a lizard basking in the sun, a snail moving over a wet leaf, a leaf unfolding in balmy spring-air, a man's consciousness contemplating a wind-rustled poplar-tree, a woman's consciousness enjoying the suckling of her infant—reaches a certain point of magical deliciousness, there automatically arises the feeling of a victory over an opposite—love over malice, pleasure over pain, peace over agitation, good over evil, life over death.

Nor is there any reason why we should stop our cosmic soundings even at this point. We can go further yet and find in these primeval sensations something far more abysmal. The worm, the fish, the grass-blade, the night-journeying planet, the dew-drinking plant, the woman happy with her child, the man happy with his girl or with his landscape, the beggar happy with his cup of coffee—all these consciousnesses, as soon as they taste the particular quality of happiness of which I am speaking, began to share in the original Creation of the World. Each in its separate pleasure becomes a god ! Between the feeling that the tramp has, for instance, of infinite relief, relaxation, ecstasy, peace, as he sips his coffee, and the feeling that the gods must have, when, in the ecstasy of their fulfilment of desire, they gaze at the world they have made and “see that it is good,” there is only a measure of degree.

The Heraclitean doctrine of a stress, a strain, a

tension between two ultimate opposites, realises itself in all these cases. And in all these cases the conscious intensity of the pleasure is definitely, although perhaps obscurely, felt to be *a triumphant opposite*.

But even at this remote point in our obstinate soundings of the nature of happiness it is not necessary to stop. Parallel with the feeling of a momentary victory of one out of two eternally contending antagonists, comes—certainly so far as human consciousness is concerned, and quite possibly in some inscrutable sense, too, with regard to these other sub-human lives—a strange mystical overtone of another kind. I refer to that primordial sense—the basis perhaps of all the “happy hunting-grounds” and “Elysian Fields” and “Nirvanas” and “Beatific Visions” of our race’s religious experience—of some overplane or super-dimension in which this time-victory of the one antagonist over the other is transferred to an eternity of peace.

Unhappily the peculiarity of this particular overtone is its transitoriness. It *feels* the eternal : it *touches* the eternal. But time moves on ; and like a raft carried upon a river, it grazes the eternal static promontory, only to be carried hopelessly again along the temporal flood. It is therefore an untrue rendering of our universal human experience, when the great Oriental theosophies sacrifice the many to the one, the personal to the impersonal, the temporal to the timeless. In this final opposition, as in all the rest, the ideal moment, the “Monochronos Hedoné,” emerges out of the conflict between Time and the Timeless, not out of the obliteration of one side or the other of this perpetual antinomy.

It is, indeed, this inescapable law of the balance of opposites that creates the occasions for all our conscious moments of happiness. When happiness predominates in our life, there always falls upon that hour and that place the broken light of a stormy day. The overtone of some other dimension, some "heaven" where all turbulent opposition is for ever overcome, is but one simple element in the experience ; and it is a psychological error and a fatal misreading of natural human feelings to emphasise it as the whole issue of the event. It remains as the first and last gesture of all conscious life, this gathering-together of all the forces of the particular entity in its effort to be happy in spite of fate. And the peculiar thing is that this effort to be happy in spite of fate is altogether a lonely thing. Any relations with other entities must to some degree disturb, hamper, distract, confuse the situation ; although to a master-craftsman in this malleable "stuff of solitude" some personal element—a felicitous sex-relation, for instance—can be a help rather than a hindrance.

Loneliness is at once the soul's supreme achievement and its strongest link with all the earlier stages of its evolution. In loneliness a human being *feels himself backward*, down the long series of his avatars, into the earlier planetary life of animals, birds, and reptiles, and even into the cosmogonic life of rocks and stones.

It is impossible to overestimate the *separating-power* of the mystery of individuality. No two human beings are alike. An abysmal gulf divides us from our nearest and dearest. Every human being has some peculiar affinity of his own with some particular stage in the

æonian evolution of consciousness. Every personal life has vast unexplored regions of sub-human existence within the circumference of its being, into which, in certain moods, and under certain conditions, it has the power of retreating. The modern human herd-instinct, as we experience it in large cities, is altogether a vulgar, ignoble, shallow, and contemptible thing. It is much nobler and more desirable to feel like a hare or a snake or a hawk, or even like a slow-worm, than to feel yourself an essential part of any human crowd.

We all of us tend more and more to be hypnotised by the human "aura" around us into losing touch with those less human elements in us which link us to other, earlier forms of planetary life. Nor is it only with more primitive forms of consciousness that our individual, personal soul is linked. It also seems to touch sometimes—but this is a strange mystery—levels of consciousness that belong to the future, levels that indicate a higher or at least a different stage in the evolution of life, levels that suggest the *surpassing of the human animal* and the change of humanity into something different from humanity. Yes, in every human being who dares to indulge himself in the fathomless loneliness that is the birthright of us all, there are both these elements of feeling—those that are super-human and those that are sub-human.

Man is a link in a long spiral ascent, not a finality. And in all of us there are non-human moods and feelings, some of which release long-buried atavisms from the past, while others contain hints and premonitions of what will be or what *might* be in the remote future.

The disturbing and magical power of human free-will renders any kind of determinism impossible. All manner of incredible experiences, anticipating the future, are to be expected. So also are all manner of incredible reversions. We have no right to assume that in the process of biological variation the whole advantage is with the present condition of human life. In the great process of cosmic change, many states of existence contained elements of consciousness superior rather than inferior to what we possess as human beings to-day. Because there has been change we have no right to take for granted that there has invariably been progress.

The power of the human will in relation to biological evolution is much more important than is usually realised. Certain distortions of human "reason" in the direction of mechanical logic—an altogether misleading and quite paltry by-alley of modern thought—have done untold harm in abrogating from the power and dignity of this creative sorcery within us. The moment any human soul begins to have faith in itself, in its unfathomable potentialities, in its untried powers of will, a great flood of liberation sweeps through it.

Every individual personality is like a vast cavern with endless avenues and stairways, leading up and down, leading north, south, east, and west. All have *that* in them which belongs to the vegetable world. All have *that* in them which belongs to a still earlier world of inorganic stellar nebulae. And we also have moods of strange prophetic premonition in which we anticipate

in our feelings the feelings of those mysterious super-human beings who in the process of time will take the place of humanity.

Modern democracy and modern machinery are accompanied by a withering and blighting aura of spiritual limitation. There is a deadly mob-hatred of the independent life of the individual diffused throughout the air. You see it in the base, malicious, partly inquisitive, partly resentful look of the average people you pass in the street. What is called "a sense of humour" in the majority of people is an expression of this.

Democratic humour is the spleen of the normal in the presence of the abnormal. It is a sense of the ludicrous and the ridiculous. And what is ludicrous and ridiculous to this objective "humour" of the herd is just those very elements in individual consciousness which in their sub-human and super-human moods transcend the common-place level of this mechanistic epoch. The gloating delight with which the typical crowd of the day listens to the radio is an expression of this. For the radio is nothing less than the collective soul of a vulgar epoch rejoicing in the contemplation of itself.

Nothing is more necessary at this hour of the world's history than to encourage individual human spirits to feel toward humanity something very different from blind love. This moral necessity of loving humanity is an hypnotic trick played by the crowd-aura upon the imagination of the individual. It is necessary to love Life—or at least to wrestle with it and wring out of it

that delicious happiness to which we have a right. But it is not necessary to love humanity. The curious thing is that among these "lovers of humanity" are many who practise more abominable cruelties than even the very insects practise on one another. Not many of these humanity-lovers feel toward every other individual soul that falls in their way infinite tenderness, infinite consideration and pity ! The idea of Hell has at any rate this amount of truth in it, that it describes, in the only way such ghastly horrors can be described, the sort of remorse, unspeakable and unutterable, that is ready to eat, like a cancer, into the heart of those who have allowed themselves to be cruel. The crowd-morale commands love for humanity, but condones abominable cruelty. But while the lonely individual soul shrinks back with suddering from every temptation to be cruel it also refuses to resign one jot or tittle of its right to its detachment from humanity and its detachment from human tradition.

But in some subtle way the insidious doctrine has been diffused upon the air of our modern society that it is a disgrace, and almost a kind of degeneracy, not to feel this emotional warmth in the presence of a crowd of fellow-creatures. I would encourage my ichthyosaurus-ego to disregard this human hypnosis ! Dressed as people are dressed in a modern crowd, harassed as people are harassed by commercial incentives, they are not objects for emotional contemplation comparable with the constellations above their heads, or with the earth or the water under their feet. This superstition of "loving" humanity can be analysed back into the

taboo of a tribal or even a pack-loyalty, very necessary for victory over enemies and for self-protection, but full of treacherous and morbid vibrations when its insidious poison corrupts the pure egoism of natural loneliness. How far Jesus Christ is to be held responsible for our feeling of furtive guiltiness when we have reactions against the race to which we belong, is an open question. William Blake's Jesus, in "The Everlasting Gospel," was "haughty to Man, humble to God." It were, perhaps, no fantastic sophistry to argue that the mere fact of yielding so constantly to an unnatural sentiment for humanity *en masse* squanders the pent-up fund of unselfishness, which each man has, in a perpetual leakage of feeble little drops, so that when we are really face to face with an occasion for drastic sympathy and desperate help, we lack the dynamic urge to action, and shuffle lamely by "on the other side of the road."

The lonely egoist—and this is sound psychology—makes by far the best and most heroic friend at a pinch. His banked-up pity and tenderness rush forth in a sudden and overwhelming flood. Who does not recall the heart-rending disillusionments one has had in appealing for real comfort to a normally constituted, good, kind man, or good, kind woman? The lonely misanthropic type of spirit, with an imaginative apprehension of what Unamuno calls "the tragic sense of life," is likely to be much less conventional and cautious in the pity he feels and the aid he gives, than the warm-blooded, genial flock-beast who loves humanity so well.

The lonely one is less likely, too, to find plausible

excuses for cruelty. In his very loneliness the hell of remorse that follows any act of cruelty—the ghastly torment of horror that leads to madness—is far less likely to be softened by specious rationalisation. The lonely man knows much better than the gregarious man *what he has done* when by word or deed he has made himself a portion of the cosmic engines of pain that hurt the helpless. Over such sins of omission or commission he broods deeply and darkly. His whole view of life is much more serious, intense, dramatic ; and by reason of the silences and reserves in which he himself habitually lives, he enters much more searchingly into “ the perilous stuff ” that poisons the life of another. For him, when he has been cruel, “ Hell is murky,” with a murkiness much more terrible than anything the herd-instinct can provoke. In his loneliness he escapes that mollifying objective humour, that social sense of proportion which with a diffused complacency allays so quickly the “ compunctious visitings ” of the dark angels. In place of loving humanity, he approaches any individual tragic figure of a man with a clair-voyant understanding that is itself the most precious kind of ointment for a tortured spirit.

No one is able to realise the basic lineaments of life in their vast and monumental austerity who fritters away his powers of awareness upon petty social nuances and comfortable human distractions. Threescore years and ten are all too short wherein to realise the huge unutterable miracle of our being alive at all ; and any contact with groups of men—the chatter, the gossip, the ridiculous competitions, the absurd rivalries—flatten

out this realisation into a tedious monotony of things that are taken for granted. It is necessary to make one grand mental gesture and get rid of the whole complicated cloud of commonplace human valuations.

A really lonely spirit can gradually come to feel itself just as much a plant, a tree, a sea-gull, a whale, a badger, a woodchuck, a goblin, an elf, a rhinoceros, a demigod, a moss-covered rock, a planetary demiurge, as a man or a woman. Such a spirit can gaze at the great sun, as he shines through the morning mist, and feel itself to be one magnetic Power contemplating another magnetic Power. Such a spirit can stand on the edge of the vast sea and feel within itself a turbulence and a calm that belong to an æon of time far earlier than the first appearance of man upon the earth. It is only out of the depths of an absolute loneliness that a man can strip away all the problematical ideals of his race and all the idols of his human ambitions, and look dispassionately about him, saying to himself, "Here am I, an ichthyosaurus-ego, with atavistic reminiscences that go back to the vegetable-world and the rock-world, and with prophetic premonitions in me that go forward to the super-men of the future !"

In loneliness of this kind, a man can face the idea of death with the most stark and grim equanimity. Indeed, such conscious loneliness has already so saturated itself with the thought of death and the thought of absolute annihilation, that the whole stream of his conscious life has become a tide-pulse in the sea of eternal non-consciousness. For it is only a trick of the

mind, this fear of death. Every day of our lives ends in sleep : and death is only the prolonging of this sleep. To sleep for seven hours—to sleep for seven million years—is exactly the same at the moment of one's awaking. In the case of death one can imagine this moment of awaking—after seven million years. The memory of one's life, its pleasures and sufferings, would begin slowly to gather shape. Vaguely and obscurely we would struggle, as we always do, against the deliciousness of sleep—a sleep that had lasted, in this case, for seven million years ; but, overcome by the lovely drowsiness, we would sink into sleep again. This second sleep might last for *another* seven million years, and a second time we might be approached by the harsh raw light and the rasping noises of returning consciousness. Wiser and weaker this time, our hold on those life-memories, now fourteen million years away, might relax more quickly, and again we would sink down into non-consciousness with a feeling of unutterable happiness—happiness more satisfying than we have ever known—and sleep on so for fourteen million more years !

Without any doubt the moments of our life while we are sliding into the unconsciousness of sleep are the happiest of all. One can prove this by recalling the scraping, harrowing, and jarring misery that any interruption—bringing us back with a jerk—produces in us. It is at these moments of falling to sleep that we are most alone. It is this mysterious isolation, suddenly intruded, that excites such a quaint anger in certain onlookers ! Others are deeply sympathetic. For my

own part I have never seen anyone asleep without experiencing that peculiar tenderness and indulgence that one feels for the dead. But I seem to be exceptional in this sympathy for the sleepy and the sleeping. The peculiarly active morale of the human race has succeeded in throwing an air of disrepute and even shame over this divine condition of sleep, so lovely and so lonely. Animals are entirely free from this fidgety conscience. How beautifully do cats and dogs yield themselves to sleep ! How beautifully do oxen and cows abandon themselves to chewing the cud ! Whether fish sleep I know not, under their rushing water ; but the sleep of birds, in their windy branches, must be one of the most delicious feelings known to sentient life.

It is quite clear that a soul devoted to the mystic happiness of lonely sensation has far less reason to shrink from death than a soul dedicated to social activity. Loneliness is already the state of being such a one loves best : and what is death if not the consummation of loneliness ? I suspect that for certain solitary egoists among men, just as for a vast number of animals and birds and fishes, the last moments of conscious life are the happiest of all. No exertion, no strain, no effort : full privilege of being as weak and unresisting as the heart could wish : a relaxed ecstasy of drowsy abandonment. What could any lonely spirit want more than this ?

And apart from the delicious feeling of falling into annihilation, the lonely spirit is able to dally pleasantly with the other great alternative. Supposing that

Pantagruel was right when he said that all souls are essentially immortal and by nature free from the scissors of Atropos, how interesting to pass, consciously and dreamily, into completely new surroundings ! In this life, to a contemplative egoist one of the most delicate sensations of all is that which comes after a long walk that has left our limbs pleasantly tired and our intellect pleasantly drowsed. Especially is this the case when at such a moment—detached from all personal anxieties—we find ourselves entering a completely unknown village. How lovely to wonder vaguely which of the inns whose signs we see swinging against the twilight, and whose windows have so warm a glow, contains our destined bed ! Such an approach, through a landscape wholly unknown, would be the coming-on of death. And with a calm, profane, impious curiosity, a true solitude-lover would await the event.

But the vegetative-godlike secrets of the ecstasy of loneliness have more subtle aspects still. Those past avatars of ours, with all their forgotten experiences and impressions, are for ever reappearing and beckoning us, to get our attention and monopolise our interest. Our buried memories, as they thus crowd around us, resemble an impatient group of Cimmerian ghosts, who, with pathetic appeals to our attention, would fain draw us away from the “ Monochronos Hedoné,” our vision of the eternal present, in which we are losing ourselves ; for the dominant happiness of the lonely ego, the happiness that is the deepest clue to his life, consists not in expressing himself or in realising himself, but in losing himself in sensation.

The Beatific Vision of the lonely man is a pure sensation—a sensation composed of the self that feels and of the object, whatever it may be, that is felt by the self. Such a sensation—like that of the yellow light upon the wall, which my ichthyosaurus-ego drowsily contemplates from his bed—becomes a thing in itself. That yellow sunlight, the magnetic radiation from the mysterious sun-god, dappled with shadows from the window-blind as a faint-blowing wind stirs it a little, is enough to occupy the whole field of the soul's consciousness. The only portion of such consciousness that is not occupied by the beauty of the yellow light is the will itself; and the will is all the while making a conscious effort to ward off any other thoughts—thoughts that, like mosquitoes troubling a sleeper, keep trying to interrupt that vigil. Except for the activity of the will, thus guarding like a sentinel the particular psychic event that is occurring, the loneliness of the ego is uninvaded.

And the ego herself does not intrude upon her own contemplations. The mystical act wherein the pure mind and this patch of yellow light from the great burning sun are brought into reciprocal harmony is not accompanied by any mental activity. In the depths of the ego the will holds the field clear, and is prepared to cry "*Cave!*" at the approach of any enemy.

The objective things, however, which the mind is contemplating, may be increased indefinitely. There is a mirror near that flickering yellowness, and sometimes its contents recede into lovely watery depths; at other times they are nothing but dark branches and

flying clouds. And the wind makes his presence known too. By causing those branches in the mirror to sway, and by throwing dappled bars of dark shadow across the yellowness on the wall, the wind enters as a participant in this psychic event.

What does the ego need more ? Not only for hours, but for years could it brood over that yellowness and watch those branches swaying in the mirror. That yellowness is the sun itself, the lord of all life ; and as the mind drinks up that yellowness, it drinks up inexhaustibly the deep fiery fountain of burning mystery. In the greyiness of that mirror moves the wind ; and upon the mystery of the wind the mind could brood for endless nights and days. I do not, of course, refer to the chemical or electric constitution of either sun or wind. That is a matter for scientific mathematics. I refer to the living *reality* of these things, in the sense in which our own personality is real and important to us quite apart from what its constituents might reveal of their chemical nature, if analysed in a laboratory.

The sun upon the wall and the wind in a mirror ! The pleasure that the ego derives from contemplating these things is of the very essence of poetry.

Let us try to imagine the kinds of thoughts they are that the will keeps back from interrupting such contemplation. Fragments of gossip that we have recently heard ; the last news of an explorer at the South Pole ; the pride we feel at being invited to-night to meet the Marquis of Carabas ; the unexpected success of a picture we have painted, of a judgment we have given, of a diplomatic campaign we have carried through ; our

delight at a word of praise we have received from our employer.

And not only these self-congratulatory thoughts. It is an odd peculiarity—and a very annoying one—of the human mind that it persists in renewing and retracing in thought dull, tiresome, unpleasant, odious occurrences. The mind seems to derive a malicious pleasure from recalling things that make our sensibility suffer. Watch the “brown-study and day-dream” look in the next person’s face you meet who is lost in thought. Is that expression a happy one? Entirely the reverse! It is a worried, miserable one.

Imagine that our ichthyosaurus-ego, now gazing at those *eidola* of sun and wind, is expecting to-day to interview all the people it dreads most. Such expectations would make it miserable. On the other hand, a casual recollection of some social success it had had would make it gloat and chuckle with base satisfaction, with the kind of pleasure that is silly, shameful, odious, ridiculous. It is a completely different sort of happiness that the ego enjoys, in its delicious loneliness, thus brooding over the living mystery of sun and wind.

All time is relative. Time when human sensations are being enjoyed is a million years longer than those vast geological, glacial, astronomical expanses over which we ponder a little sometimes but by which we feel inherently unimpressed. It is the long expanse of Life’s history upon earth that gives their chief interest and importance to these cosmic elements. The sun and the wind have been felt and worshipped, have been regarded with awestruck veneration, have been

surrounded with fabulous tales, have been mingled with conscious experiences, longer than the scientists think. Their stark cosmic qualities have grown mellow and rich, and encrusted with sentient imaginations. In the far-back pre-terrestrial days a gust of chaotic wind or the travelling of sun-rays through unpeopled gulfs would be merely a bodily movement of some great spirit. But no plant or animal would have watched it. It is because the wind has been so long a god to so many animals, that it is so strange and thrilling to the animal Man.

It is grievous how few human beings there are who make the full use that can be made of the essential loneliness of all lives. Instead of being recognised for what it is—the most divine gift of Heaven—this awareness of loneliness has come to be regarded as something from which we ought to escape as soon as possible, as something that is at once culpable and sad—a selfish animal-sensation and a metaphysical horror. It is, on the contrary, the only adequate refuge from the sufferings of life and the only enduring ground of all deep happiness. And it is as universal as it is personal. Boys and girls can enjoy it equally with grown-up people. Maids and mothers can enjoy it equally with men. Women, as a matter of fact, do naturally and instinctively saturate themselves with the subtle intimations of loneliness a good deal more easily than men. How often, in the faces of women, both young or old, do we catch the absorbed, abstracted look of the delicate trance of loneliness ! A mother nursing her baby, a little girl rocking the cradle of her doll—these have been

endowed by Nature with some quite especial opportunity for the deep mysterious feelings I am trying to bring to light. Those "long, long thoughts," too, which the simple-minded poet so profoundly attributes to the day-dreams of young boys, belong to the same rich category.

When Robert Burns was asked what moments of his life were the happiest, he answered, "When I am happy thinking." And of *what* was he thinking? Not of any "worry," you may be sure—and future events, if real at all, are always worrying—nor, exactly, in all probability, of any very definite event in the past. Not of "events," in fact, at all, do we think, any of us, when we enjoy this *energeia akinesis* which is the life of the gods! Certain sensations of the past are cunningly blended then with certain sensations of the present. It is just here that I differ very widely from the elaborately worked-out conclusions of Marcel Proust. He seems to arrive at his intricate proof of the existence of an Eternal Being in us, nourished upon temporal nourishment while Itself remains timeless and deathless, from an intense contemplation of a series of adventitious and accidental happenings, over the occasions of which he has no control. The way of life I am advocating here makes the bold initial plunge of assuming that it possesses within it the power of arbitrarily summoning up these various temporal sensations which, by reason of their strange identity, feed "the Eternal Being" in us with its required nourishment.

Nor is it even necessary for me to assume that this

“ I am I ” within us—this animal-vegetable-mineral “ self ” that I have chosen to name the ichthyosaurus-ego—is “ eternal ” in the sense of necessarily surviving death. When it is “ enjoying itself ” at its happiest, its feeling, so far as such an indescribable thing can be put into words, seems rather to be that the moment is so precious, so deeply saturated with all the finer essences of the past, that there is no room in one’s consciousness for any concern about the future, for any concern about eternity. It *may* be an eternal feeling for this very reason, namely that it has ceased to be aware of the passing of time. But I do not think that among the boys and girls, or the men and women either, who secretly indulge in this delicious ecstasy, there is any definite consciousness of any idea of the eternal.

I always fancy that these old-fashioned traditional concepts—time, space, eternity, infinity—are no less unsatisfactory, as rough-and-ready logical generalisations about our actual experiences of life, than are the more complicated symbols used by modern science and modern metaphysic. These logic-labels are *all* unsatisfactory. They are *all* misleading. They are *all*—to put it plainly and bluntly—*unessential* when compared with the intimate and personal sensations across which they are spread, with their maps, their measuring-squares, their compasses, their figures !

That aspect of things which the old philosophers named “ Time ” does not naturally or inevitably enter into these cosmos-sensations of sentient loneliness. Nor does what they used to call “ Space ” so enter. A

definite abstracting-motion of thought is required to excogitate both these mysterious entities or processes or whatever they are. And if the old-fashioned Time and Space are analytical after-thoughts, how much more are the new symbols that have taken their places alien to the real sensations of the ego ! There is only one ultimate all-pervading duality of consciousness ; and that is, the difference between the self and the not-self. Loneliness, and only loneliness, reveals the full implication of this abysmal gulf.

My ichthyosaurus-ego enjoying the cumulated sensations of the animal-bird-reptile-fish-vegetable life need by no means be the ego of a grown man, still less of a wise man. A little-girl consciousness can enjoy this Beatific Vision with just as rare, just as non-human an ecstasy. Any young girl can set her will to isolating these planetary feelings and indulging in them with an increasing intensity just as resolutely as the wisest philosopher. Indeed, as I have hinted, there is a certain natural inertness and lethargy in women that gives them an advantage, rather than the reverse.

The essential trick is to grow vividly and even morbidly conscious of the feelings of one's own body. Your limbs are experiencing, for example, that kind of delicate and delicious fatigue which all human limbs are liable to feel after any normal activity. Well, it is possible to use this pleasant fatigue, just as it is possible to use the slow approaches of sleep, as a miraculous medium for enjoying all manner of earth-secrets. How few young people, how few boys and girls, have will-power enough to intensify such day-dreams, morning

after morning, evening after evening, till they really attain the lonely-ego awareness !

The historic human moralities, the traditional human codes have so corrupted our sub-human and super-human potentialities, that we indulge these impulses furtively and with a sense of shame. Instead of *cultivating* idleness, as we were wise to do, we imitate those contemptible slaves of an insane morale, the bees and the ants, and do our utmost to expel from our natures all those lonely, lovely, atavistic tendencies that we share with trees and whales and serpents, with the planetary orbs and with the invisible gods ! Have you never seen an ant scrambling across a grass-blade, and felt how superior an entity the latter is, compared with the former ?

The world of insects is a ghastly and horrible world, dominated by a monstrous kind of mechanical insanity. And yet this is the very world whose architectural, social, and sexual activities, galvanised into such ferocious uniformities, we are called upon by the ethics of our time to endeavour to reproduce ! The attempt has been hitherto singularly successful. More and more do the countenances of our machine-serving generations come to resemble those of this maniacal insect-world. It would seem that if the human race refuses to live like lonely trees or lonely rocks, the gods will punish it by making it live like the black ants. I am not altogether sympathetic with the extreme poetical idealism of such writers as D. H. Lawrence and Robinson Jeffers, who tell us to become like lions and eagles. Alas, I am conscious of having much more in common with the

patient ass or the malicious adder, than with these aristocrats of the non-human. But because we cannot be eagles, there is no reason why we should be gregarious slaves, bent on making life as much as possible like an ant-hill or a wasp-nest.

You, my reader, are, let us suppose, the mother of five lusty children who are at this moment all at school, while, ere you proceed to the kitchen, you yourself sit, musing and pondering, at your own parlour-window. Let us suppose that it has been a considerable effort to get your husband and your children comfortably and safely off, but they have all left you now, and you are alone. Allow me to assume that you are no longer young or beautiful, and that they are ungainly enough, these human arms and legs that you stretch out with such infinite relief, as you sink back in your rocking-chair. None of these things matter in the least. Your soul, that "inner ego" of yours, that the modern philosophers take so roguish a pleasure in proving not to exist (but of whose existence you have so many irrefutable assurances) does not feel itself to be that of a middle-aged woman. With a large and spacious gesture, or with a faint and surreptitious one, according to your individual character, you proceed now to isolate this soul of yours, using your physical sensations to emphasise your separate existence. You can use your unpleasant physical sensations—an actual pain, for instance, in your back or under your ribs—almost as well as a pleasant one for this purpose. *Any* sensation, in fact, will serve, so long as it reminds you that the pyramid of your consciousness has its base upon the earth, and

so long as it focuses, so to speak, at a definite point on the surface of our globe, this dialogue of a limited self with an unlimited not-self.

Pain, be it not too acute, is often a very useful aid to a certain quickening of ego-consciousness. The mere effort of will required in dealing with such discomfort, the mere gathering-together of your life-force in defiant resistance to this thing, gets you started with a more resolute energy in your contemplation of sun and moon and earth and sky.

Sitting at your window now, you, a woman of fifty, recognise clearly enough that your soul, your real inmost identity, is entirely alone. In your deepest life you are independent of your man and of all your five children ! As you think of them now, they recede and recede and recede—as if they were the fantastic creations of your early girlhood dreams. And not only do *they* recede. All your visible, palpable, circumstantial worldly life recedes—its values, its worries, its ambitions, its miserable failures. None of these things seem at this moment to matter in the least. You are now practising that rare and delicate art which, for the last ten years perhaps, you have been using your will to perfect yourself in—the art of forgetting everything except certain particular sensations ! Absolutely alone in the world, your soul floats forth impelled by particular physical pains which you proudly conquer, soothed by particular physical awareness which you delight to indulge in—floats forth and contemplates this grass, this road, this earth-mould, this grey sky, this bare branch, this pale, watery, filmy sun.

For twenty-five thousand years—probably for æons of time immensely longer—human women have moved about above this patch of earth you are now looking at, and between interlacing trees, of which this branch of yours is a descendant. Before these human women ever lived, beast-women, bird-women, and further back yet reptile-women, have contemplated this same watery sun with sly, slant, obsequious, cruel, enigmatic, tender eyes. This contemplation of the sun (the great god), of the moon (the strange god), of the sea (the unfathomable god), of the earth (the answering god), is in reality the one and sole purpose of all terraqueous life. A certain mysterious shiver of happiness accompanies this cult of contemplation ; and this shiver, this vibration, this flood of something rarer than air, rushing through you, melting your very bones, does not require any theory about “eternity,” or indeed any theory about the beginning of or the end of the universe, to justify its existence. It is its own justification. It is Life itself, caught as she bends with ravishing, mocking loveliness over the burning sun or the corpse-cold moon, or as she moves across the wet mosses on the dewy earth.

Yes, it is Life itself, so much more real than all those rational abstractions from its mysterious flow which we name Time and Space, Good and Evil, Spirit and Matter. It is Life itself, only known, only caught, only felt—in its larger, calmer, more magical effluences—by the soul that has learnt the master-secret of loneliness !

The surface of our awareness is continually being

provoked and teased by practical necessity. This necessity must be endured ; for we all have to bear the burden of being human. We all have to pay back the debt we owe, for being born at all, to our long, elaborate, human inheritance. But when, beyond these primal necessities of earning our living and being responsible for our dependents, human tradition seeks to lay upon us a complicated catalogue of moral obligations and service-duties, it is best to sink down into the lap of our primal life-sensation, from the depths of which we can afford to take such matters extremely lightly.

Let no one persuade you, O boy, O girl, dreaming at your window, with your eyes fixed on the far-off road crossing the hill-top, that it is wrong to waste your precious time in such idle sensations. It is not wrong ! All your duties—school, home, office, community—all your problems—politics, science, economics, industry—are only so many means by which you purchase the right to the paradise of these same lonely feelings.

There is a magnetic power in Nature, whose faint, furtive whisper, floating to us from certain sideways-captured moments of night and day, is always at hand to reassure us in the pursuit of this lonely rapture, this egocentric awareness, which seems to the energetic ones of the world something akin to a deadly vice. Where our conscience ought to prick us is where we steal such ecstasy at the expense of the unrelaxed, unintermittent labours of others ! We all have to bear the burden. We all have to pay scot and lot for our food, clothes, shelter, warmth, soap-and-water. Base and brutal, mean and caddish, are those who take for

granted the material labours of others on their behalf. But when we have paid our Cæsar's Penny to Humanity for our sustenance, it is folly and weakness to allow ourselves to be hypnotised by human moralists and human idealists into accepting, without a considerable pinch of ichthyosaurus rock-salt, a purpose of life that has no outlet from its feverish humanism. God Himself used to be such an outlet. And so were the Homeric Immortals. His presence or their presences possessed a large, free, elemental, non-moral margin, like so much sea-foam and salt-water and flowing air, where one could cool the fever of virtue and bathe in the spaciousness of the irresponsible.

What I wish to communicate to my imaginary lady, dreaming at her parlour-window, is that while in complete egocentric satisfaction contemplating that watery sun-orb suspended between those wet November branches she forgets her husband and her five children, forgets her neighbours, forgets her cats, she is not doing anything wrong from which she *ought to be roused and stirred up*. If husband, children, neighbours, cats—yes, and all the pots and pans now awaiting her attention on the kitchen-stove—were suddenly to vanish away, this miraculous female consciousness of hers, now contemplating this miraculous aqueous sun-disk and this rain-wet branch, would still remain the ultimate justification for human life's having appeared at all upon this planet ! The old, deep, suspicious hostility to sensuality which for ten thousand years in the East, and for two thousand years in the West, has troubled humanity's conscience, has been extended so far, that, in

its maniacal Manichæanism, it makes us dubious not only of erotic sensuality, but also of the most elemental sensuousness.

Our Western civilisation at the present moment requires nothing so much as a John the Baptist of sensuousness, a Prophet of simple, primeval, innocent sensuality. The brutal pursuit of gross, active, gregarious pleasure which is the chief purpose of life of the machine-slaves of our time, has absolutely nothing in common with the lovely, magical, pure sensations that such a John the Baptist of the senses would advocate. He would baptise them into the ecstasy of simply being alive upon the earth ! He would baptise them into the pure contemplation of grass, water, sand, mud, trees, clouds, and pokeweeds ! It is quite certain that simple indolent savages, all the world over, derive a thrilling satisfaction out of these things, such as we have completely lost the power of feeling. Oh ! how mad—oh, how monstrous—our human limitations are ! Here appear under the sun the conscious soul and the sensitive nerves of a modern living creature. Here appears under day and night the dark-brooding soul (in touch with sub-human and super-human levels of life) of what is perhaps an *immortal* creature. And what does this divine Being do but get itself so tied up with the tedious, irrelevant details of over-humanised conventions, that it sacrifices its very birthright ! Where are now those weather-sensitive, earth-magnetised feelings of great elm-trees, oak-trees, and ash-trees, conscious of every trickle of the grey cold rain darkening the interstices of their tough bark, and forming black pools

in the mossy laps of their silent roots? Where are now those feelings that ought to be *your* feelings. O lonely human soul; for you are allied to this happy, dreamy, vegetative world—a world in many respects so superior to the world of man?

Where are now those voluptuous ecstasies of holy lassitude wherewith the great slippery-shouldered whale steers his course, spouting and floating, dreaming and diving, half-way round the world—feelings that in your place and in your measure you ought to share, O protean human soul? Where are now those dumb, blind, sub-human intimations, drumming dimly their cosmogonic responses to the pulse-murmurs of the terrestrial globe, such as prehistoric lichen-covered rocks have known? Hast thou lost altogether, O too-humanised and mob-bound soul, hast thou lost altogether and vulgarly purged off for ever the last royal vestige of our deep planet's consciousness of itself?

Every individual human spirit, whether male or female, has its moments of startled recognition, when it realises that all its human duties and obligations are of far less importance than a certain abysmal *rapproch* with the elemental powers. This *rapproch* does not imply any mystical faith in any *anima mundi* or "over-soul" behind the appearances of things. It does imply, however, a strange sense of being aware that these material appearances of our present astronomical and visible universe *are not all there is*—not, indeed, more than a fragment or fraction—of what the vast reservoirs of life hold in their obscure fountains of being. What the lonely consciousness really feels, as it lies back upon itself

and stares sternly, resolutely, intently at what it chooses to select among these phantoms, is that it is prepared for all emergencies, and, like a crafty old wanderer that has been incarnated many times, that it has learnt to a nicety the trick of obliterating the horrors and enjoying the beauty. Such horrors, such beauty, it is prepared to assume, have to be dealt with in every conceivable dimension of existence ; and the much-travelled soul, knowing what to expect, is ready to cope with both sets of impressions as they shall present themselves.

Every soul, whether that of a tree, or a plant, or a rock, or a horse, or a man, has the power of drawing magnetic energy from levels of being far removed from the particular array of bodily phantoms among which it is doomed in this particular life to function. All consciousness—and who dare inscribe, and upon what material dare he inscribe, the limits of any consciousness?—mounts up in cumulative and majestic waves of indescribable gradations towards the consciousness of the gods. Between worm-life and god-life every human soul is suspended. What the lonely soul must shake off is the man-made idea that certain virtuous practical activities are the main purpose of his conscious life. There is only one purpose of all conscious life, and that is to grow calmly, steadily, quietly more conscious ! It is in loneliness alone that the human soul can achieve this inner growth ; for while we are surrounded by other souls, the noises that they make, and the hot, sour odours that they exude, distract and waylay us. It is fully time that what I have grotesquely chosen to name the “ichthyosaurus-awareness” in us should revolt

against man-made limitations. Where the ichthyo-saurus-ego stretches its limbs in the sublime consciousness of the simple fact of being alive, *there*, always and for ever, stirs and feels not only a worm of the slime, but also a god of the empyrean !

The world's foundations are much less opaque than the practical man or the flippant *persifleur* supposes. Great spurting jets of indescribable magnetism come up from the abysses and force their way through the nervous chinks and crannies of the most pitiable Abject alive. Weak, idle, lazy, neurotic, eccentric men and women have the chance (for the weakest soul among us has the free-will of a demiurgic god) to live a personal life that sets at defiance the modern economic command to turn human life into a galvanised ant-heap. Let the virtuous bees swarm ! Let the obedient ants rush about after their eggs ! Honey and eggs are only means to ends. Where the soul of a man is concerned, it is a question of the arrangement of thought, not of honey or eggs.

The human race has been betrayed into substituting the meanest means, the lowest, most unimportant, most contemptible means for the real purpose of life. The real purpose of life is simply and solely *the arrangement of thought*. Every organic thing—and, it may easily be, every inorganic thing—has its own secret reaction to its surroundings—to its not-self. This is its living-purpose ; and there is no other in the whole universe ! A man, a cat, a geranium in a window-box, all three must adjust themselves somehow to that which is not themselves. This adjustment goes on in loneliness and

implies loneliness. Other men, other cats, other plants in the box, only confuse the issues. We are all haunted. We are all menaced by damnation. We are all threatened by horrors. But the escape lies in ourselves. When we plunge into gregarious life, into practical life, into active life, our soul is temporarily committing suicide.

This practical gregarious life, whether it consists of the activity of what is called "work" or of the activity of what is called "pleasure," is just an interim of *no-life*. It is a temporary abdication of the high privileges of an immortal soul. This is not the case with sleep. Sleep offers, in its approaches and in its recessions, some of the most precious of all opportunities for lonely adjustment to the ultimate mystery. Certain kinds of works—the ones that imply loneliness and freedom of mind, and are performed independently of mutual initiative—can, if the right mental trick be practised—that is to say, if one learns how to slip off into a brown-study while one is "working"—be pressed most wonderfully into the service of this unique purpose of life. The silliest of all human betrayals of this great open secret is what is usually called Pleasure. This is far more destructive than any form of work to the low-voiced murmurs of the abyss. The Erotic—every possible kind of erotic feeling—can most beautifully, lingeringly, thrillingly be associated with this contemplative mood. Indeed, the true basic rhythm and secret reciprocity of contemplation is nothing less than a sublimation of erotic ecstasy. It is with lust that one contemplates the sun and the moon. It is with lust that one contemplates earth-mould, sea-sand, meadow-grass, mountain-rocks,

wayside-mud, wall-moss, pavement-pools, tree-lichen, and the blue smoke of country chimneys.

The adjustment of mind necessary for the indulgence of this most holy and sacred lust is an adjustment that can be achieved by anyone. It is a trick of the will. It is a trick possible to *any* will, however weak. If it needs more than will to achieve it, this "more" is simply and solely *faith*—faith in the power of the will to work this simple magic. Every mental adjustment depends on one's faith that one can make such an adjustment ! The will will be found to be free—and not only free, but freer and freer—in cumulative proportion as one has greater faith that it is free.

Because this contemplation can in imagination sink down below the forms of things and embrace or defy the First Cause, there is no earthly reason for calling it a mystical feeling. It has nothing mystical about it. It is wholly, entirely, utterly, shamelessly sceptical. This means that it neither implies nor refuses to imply the existence of matter. It implies only a sceptical suspension of judgment over the whole problem of the difference between matter and spirit. This lonely planetary lust which links worms to eagles and blind-worms to gods, has naturally no cause to worry itself as to whether it is "spiritual" or "material." It has gone, so to speak, *behind matter and behind spirit*. It has slipped away, in fact, to that immemorial, elemental empire of the ancient Anarch out of which these recent distinctions—of a miserable twenty thousand years—have swirled up into being. I do not for one second advocate a suspension of the world-deep difference

between brutal cruelty and harmless sensuousness. This difference is indeed the sole "good" and "evil" of the perduring mud-bed of any ichthyosaurus-ego ; and I submit that it is, quite conceivably, the "good" and "evil" of the lives of plants, reptiles, birds, planetary bodies, worms, and water-newts. One actually encounters, in dealing with the vegetable-world—and all gardeners will bear me out—something cruel and malignant in individual specimens of the same type of vegetation, something serene and self-contained in other specimens.

The vulgar-minded human moralist, in heavy facetious horse-play, will declare that my contention that human tradition has betrayed and defeated a certain magical happiness, is a purely antinomian attempt to escape from the burden of virtue. One can catch the very *timbre* of the mob-psychology humour with which he will toss off this searching *bon mot*. A word in your ear, Monsieur ! The truth is that this kind of lonely contemplation, in its stark monotonous simplicity, would be to your gross, warm, gregarious, fussy nature an austerity of discipline more ascetic than that of St. Simeon Stylites.

No, the kind of loneliness that sinks back upon itself and casts its eye upon the ebbing and flowing of the great bitter waters, and upon the silence of the rooted rocks, is not the parent of any easy self-indulgence. It cannot even abandon itself to that wistful, tender, Virgilian yearning, that melting feeling, that there is something pitifully friendly behind the show of Nature that must in the end redeem all sorrows ! All it has a

right to feel (being so wearily sceptical of all high mystic hopes) is just the actual palpable magic of the forms and shapes which it chooses to select from the scene immediately before it. Its attitude to the universe is neither a tender sentiment nor a confiding trust. It has endured so many bruises, this loneliness—it has been starved, ostracised, outraged, wounded, so many times, that it has come to feel that every possible dimension of life brings its own peculiar instruments of suffering ! Its attitude to the particular universe it finds itself enduring, while this passing incarnation lasts, might be summed up in the following words : “ Do thou thy worst, O world ! still, still, and in spite of all, will I enjoy thy beauty ! ”

Loneliness, in fact, is a spiritual state that only those reach who have, so to speak, “ been born many times ” and have travelled many planetary roads. Flocks and swarms and shoals and schools and packs and herds and mobs are the natural surrounding of the crude, gross, unintelligent babyhood of humanity’s long pilgrimage. This babyhood, recognisable as a recurrent mental state in the luckless crowds of men, is always reappearing when conditions favour it. It grows lush, warm, loose, silly, and rank, like unpleasant weeds ; and the condition that especially favours it is a feeble idealistic hypnosis of foolish optimism on the one hand, and a slavish service of machines on the other ! The crowd obeys ; and the money-lords and the popular entertainers, far more brutal, far less sentimental and humane than the masses themselves, give them their moral watchwords, which the ministers of religion seal

with their seals and the professors of ethics paraphrase with their eloquence.

Loneliness is more than a sensuous state. It is a metaphysical state. The lonely creature recognises well enough that all the universes and all the levels of being are "full of gods," some favourable to man, some hostile to man, some desperately occupied in favouring certain men and persecuting others, some indifferent to the whole spectacle and completely aloof. The lonely creature, as I have hinted above, keeps up its Dialogue in the Deep with the mysterious First Cause, and alternately thanks it and upbraids it. But short of this profane and individual attitude of thanking and upbraiding the First Cause, the philosophy of real loneliness is, in spite of its belief in many gods, essentially atheistic. That is to say, it has no confidence in the friendliness of the First Cause, and no respect for It or affection for It. It has respect and affection for various "little gods," of whom the elementals and the saints and the spirits of the dead and the good Magician Jesus Christ are probably the ones it knows best.

But the loneliness of the soul, thus refusing to be fooled by any cosmic sentiment into regarding life as ultimately friendly, is not indifferent to the difference between good and evil. Among animals and birds—and probably among plants—there have always been some born "good," that is to say kind and pitiful, and others born "evil," that is to say ill-tempered and cruel. Must it not be the same with regard to the gods? Is it not extremely probable that wicked,

unhappy creatures are obsessed by wicked, unhappy gods ?

But all these matters are superstitions of comparatively little importance ! The important thing is to get into the habit of sinking back upon an obstinate interior stoicism whose word to the various universes into which it is incarnated is always the same—" I intend, in spite of your cruelty, to enjoy your beauty ; so rain your blows on my head, and we'll see how long I can go on defying you and being happy in spite of you ! " It is, after all, out of its surrounding universe that every soul selects those aspects of beauty that especially appeal to it, and struggles to forget those aspects of horror that especially disgust it.

The lonely soul is yet to be born that really dares to say to objects and phantoms and events and essences of all possible universes, " Lo, I accept ye all ! " When Walt Whitman uttered words to this effect, he doubtless experienced a wave of greater life-gusto than most of us have ever experienced. But all the same he was lying.

Another serious flaw in Walt Whitman's attitude is his indiscriminate fusion of good and evil. When he says, " Evil propels me and the reform of evil propels me ; I stand indifferent ; I moisten the roots of all that has grown," he is talking like a fool—talking, in fact, for the sake of making a grandiose gesture, contrary to his real intimate experience of life. In other words, here too he is telling lies. The only " goodness " is being kind and pitiful, and the only " badness " is being unkind and cruel. The " good," in this sense, make their

own infinite heaven. The " bad " in this sense, make their own infinite hell. Not that this heaven comes at once to the good, or this hell to the bad. Both states wait for a long while in ambush. But they will come. Sooner or later they will come. It is, however, true that the " good " are always going down to Hell and liberating a certain number of the " bad." But this duality goes to the roots of Life. William Blake, like so many other mystics, loves to confuse the issues between goodness and badness. He is entirely wrong in this. It will not do ! This dualism sinks down to the very bottom of the cosmic pond, and doubtless extends, as I have already hinted, not merely to the fish down there, but to the subaqueous vegetation as well !

To return to the lonely ichthyosaurus-ego. This ichthyosaurus-ego exists in every man, woman, and child. It is the feeling of the soul in relation to its body and in relation to what surrounds its body. It is profoundly susceptible to moods of goodness and moods of evil. If it selects the former mood it grows slowly happier. If it selects the latter mood it grows slowly more miserable. But it *has* selected " the mood of good " if it feels kindly and acts pitifully to all that come near it. Apart from this, the more indolent, irresponsible, careless, profane, delicious sensations it can enjoy, the better for it, and the more luck to it !

Our rulers at the present day, with their machines and their preachers, are all occupied in putting into our heads the preposterous notion that activity rather than contemplation is the object of life. I admit that if the lonely soul is to be a " good soul " it must put into

action a certain modicum of its tender pitifulness for other, less lucky, souls. Fortunately there exists in the world a certain material, a certain stuff, a certain talisman, that makes it possible for well-intentioned people to do the maximum of good with the minimum of exertion. I refer to money. The busy-bodies who agitate themselves from morning to night in taking away our drugs, would do much better if they stinted themselves of a few comforts and handed us some cash ! What we all want is money. We don't want to revolutionise our habits. We don't want to drink the dregs of our responsibilities. A bolt from the blue may kill us to-morrow. A few hours, a few days, a few years of peace is what we crave ! Give unto us, O Haroun-al-Raschid, the golden ducats of a little freedom and a little rest !

If a bolt of catastrophic moral lightning, forked and terrible, were to shiver down through the psychic tissues of all layers of organic life, from the highest to the lowest, dividing the "good" from the "evil," there would be found "good" angels, "good" dogs, "good" horses, "good" fishes, as well as "good" ichthyosaurus-egos, who have the same good-will to the sentiences that approach them.

And of what ultimately consists the mood whose gesture is so healing to the touch ? It is *the mood of acceptance*. We need not *love* these other souls. Love is always an ambiguous thing, rarely free from a vicious itch of possessiveness, ever on the thin edge of turning into resentment and hatred. As our lonely self-awareness gathers together its strength to endure, its strength to

select, to forget, to enjoy—as, in its hollow electric shell of isolation, with vibrant universes above it, beneath it, and around it, it casts its heavy-lidded, scale-slit, sleepy dragon's-eye upon the dizzy abysses—its feeling toward other consciousnesses is one of cold, quiet, demonic *acceptance*. Why should it love them or hate them or seek to change them? Absolute lord and god of its own happiness, independent of every external circumstance, it allows itself the last supreme self-deception of assuming that all these other lives are governed entirely by fate. “They are what they are,” so it thinks to itself; “nor have they any chance of refusing to be what they are. I alone”—so doth the proud, sly, weary ichthyosaurus-soul soliloquise—“I alone am possessed of the godlike power of free-will.” This deliberate self-deception about the responsibility of other entities is one of those noble illusions which, as Goethe says, Nature herself encourages us to cultivate.

Nothing could be further from the truth than the lively contention one hears so glibly tossed off, that all the philosophies are false, and that the redemption of our race lies in science. Never has our race been in greater need of a new philosophy; nor is there any doubt what instincts in us this new philosophy must satisfy. It must satisfy the religious instinct; and at the same time it must satisfy the sublimated sex-instinct. One might, indeed, maintain that it must satisfy the megalomania-instinct. For this last is a perfectly legitimate and entirely natural feeling. All individual human souls, when left to themselves, indulge in megalomaniacal feelings; and they are entirely right to do so! It

is impossible to overestimate the terrific potentialities, magical, mysterious, unbounded, of any human soul. Consider the senses alone. How porous with incredible ecstasies each one of these senses is—a gate, a gate into the seventh heaven !

It is a monstrous thing that a mere conventional human tradition, created by a mob-consensus of silly babyish minds, should be able to cast the hypnotic blight of a superficial sense of worldly humour upon these entirely admirable feelings of power and depth which we ought secretly to indulge to the limit if we are to be thrillingly happy. These feelings are not at all a sign of madness. The delusions and manias of insanity are utterly different. But, of course, to any gross mob-humour—the humour, for instance, that thinks it funny to draw a pencilled moustache upon the lip of a pretty female on a billboard-advertisement—the sort of individual pride to which I am referring would appear identical with madness.

It is in this hypnotic power to wither the life-springs of legitimate spiritual expansion that so many forms of what is called “humour” are so deadly and murderous. One of the strangest psychic weaknesses we have is the weakness of not daring to enjoy our own secret pride because if our thoughts *were overheard* they would excite a guffaw of laughter in any group of practical men and women. It is time to revolt against this slavish obedience to mob-control. The good side of psycho-analysis is that it frees so many happiness-giving instincts from the taint of sin. But its bad side is that it tends to regard as abnormalities and aberrations feelings that

are full of the most healthy and vigorous creative life. And so much illumination is supposed to emerge from the mere use of a long, new name ! But this is quite silly. No one knows anything more about anything through the use, for example, of the word "introvert."

What any individual soul must do that wishes to live a thrillingly secretive life, and a life worthy of the planet Earth, is to detach itself completely from these contemporary fads and fashions. And, by the gods, it must detach itself from more than this ! It must detach itself from some of the oldest human traditions. It must, in fact, as I have been steadily hinting, step sideways out of the human-consciousness groove into the backward consciousness of animal-vegetable life, and into the forward consciousness of unrealised godlike life.

How well one knows the sort of person indicated when one hears a man described as "so very human !" One even knows the kind of handshake he will give you—a handshake that is warm, fleshy, perspiring, and given so vigorously that one's fingers tingle. The cult of "the warmly human" has, indeed, been carried to such a degree, and the crowd "aura" has become so predominant there and has come to possess such a rank zoological smell, that it is an unbelievable relief when one encounters a really proud and lonely spirit. The loneliness of such a being extends itself around him like a spiral windstorm made up of restorative north-east airs, full of astringent recovery and quick with cool, sweet rain.

It is a popular delusion to assume that such a being is of necessity tragically unhappy because he is lonely. He is, on the contrary, so profoundly happy, that he can bear vexations, hardships, annoyances, neglects, that would completely destroy the well-being of any other kind of person. The secret lies in his concentration, day after day, and year after year, upon the little, sensuous things that carry his ecstasy in their essence, as flower-buds carry the golden pollen-dust in their hollow petals. The tastes of coffee and tea, for instance, with their quickening influences, are things that come to be associated with the rich earth-mould scents of certain morning-atmospheres, just as the smell of burning stalks and dead leaves carries for those whose childhood has been passed in a garden a peculiar and symbolic significance.

The inner life of a lonely human spirit is made up of a thousand thrilling feelings that depend upon all manner of subtle electric vibrations. His loneliness is, in fact, like a great Gothic cathedral where the sun comes in directly from a cavernous open door, and indirectly through innumerable painted windows. Thus it is that our ichthyosaurus-ego, lying on its metaphorical mud-bed or dragging its dragon-scales along the brackish marshes of our common life, laps up its immortal sop. It lives, in fact, on the bread of old memories dipped in the milk of new sensations. And this bread-and-milk of its deep lonely happiness is really indestructible ; for it is the food of the generations. It is when we are happy in our solitary thoughts, that we feel, stirring within us, roused by a touch, a taste, a

smell, the deep-buried contemplative life of our remote ancestors.

Yes, the happiest moments of all, in a life of loneliness that has come to make a cult of these things, are those moments when the dim memories drawn from the lives of our ancestors mount up to the surface of the mind. Proust is wrong when he says that these moments depend upon chance. They can be created by an act of the will. The whole dominant purpose of the ego's existence is to call up these dim memories and carry them further. Nor is this an unworthy task, whether the soul survive death or not. Is not the gathering-up and carrying-further of all this magical sense-life of the ages the most worthy return that any soul can make to that aspect of the First Cause to which it is possible to feel grateful? Wholly grateful for one's individual life not any soul can be; but when one feels, welling up from dim, far-away levels of being, certain indescribable life-waves, it is impossible not to feel an almost personal sense of gratitude to something.

If there be any cosmic reality in any way corresponding to our idea of a First Cause, such a First Cause must contain, like all its minor creations, the Good and the Evil. The lonely soul either just sleepily closes up its weary unseduced eye before that primal "evil," or it curses it in a furious malice-dance; while all the time toward that primal "good" (in the bosom of the same Power) it feels irresistible pulses of gratitude. In any case, there is nothing in the world, except certain very rare states of love, for which more gratitude is due to one's guardian angel (whether it is snatched from an

unsympathetic First Cause or not) than this fluctuating underflow of vague, delicious memories.

Infinitely various are such memories. But I think almost all of them will be found to partake of the nature of psychic palimpsests wherein certain images from one's own past recede back and back and back, into much vaguer impressions from the lives of one's ancestors. How often, for instance, if one lives in a city, does the sudden rising, wet and gusty, of an autumn wind •and a sudden whirling drift of blown leaves transport the mind to some Northern village-street, where one crosses a swollen river where perhaps a great moss-grown mill-wheel turns, or a creeping wagon and a heavy horse make one draw back against the parapet as they slowly pass, laboriously drawing, shall we say, a fallen tree-trunk whose exposed and muddy roots reveal several little ferns still clinging there just as when the tree was upright. Or from the desolation of the same pavements a wilder, colder breath transports one to the crest of an upland road, from the top of which, far down in a rain-swept valley, we can see dim, rich, castellated roofs and the towers of a Gothic church.

When one thinks how many indurated common impressions of the monotonous incidents of daily earth-life and daily seashore-life must linger in the convoluted fibres of one's ancestral memory, is it any wonder that a touch of sharp-blowing air or a glimpse of fast-driving mist can melt our bones with a sudden ecstasy "too deep for tears"? Oh, it is time, it is time, for an entirely new philosophy to arise—a philosophy setting

free the suppressed longings of our nature for cool, large, lonely imaginings, for sensuous feelings, vague, delicious, and dim, that are far deeper and more precious than any conceivable overt action !

IV

The philosophy that shall give one the right to devote one's life to such secret sensations, the philosophy that shall defend the primary importance of these sensations, will it not have to be a philosophy that possesses enough scepticism to undermine and relegate to utter unimportance a thousand ingrained human prejudices? It will have to be a philosophy—and this book is a rough wooden ploughshare furrowing the way for the nobler revelations to follow—capable of undermining completely this popular sense of humour against which I am for ever tilting in vain!

There is a certain type of facetiousness, as I have already hinted, that is full of hatred against the free, cold, non-human loneliness which it would be this philosophy's aim to create. Has it never yet been observed that *humour* more than anything else is the grand bourgeois trick of reducing to the vulgar mob-level every free and natural gesture of the planetary mind? The academic, pseudo-scientific bourgeois-spirit is just as hostile to the lonely sensations upon which any such non-human cosmic philosophy would depend, as is the worldly bourgeois-spirit. This hostility, especially upon its humorous side, is most beautifully illustrated by the blind hatred of Rousseau that inspires nearly every modern article written by nearly every modern publicist of our time. Every vigorous age

has its dedicated *bête noire* among earlier epochs ; and ours is certainly Rousseau. Now, there is undoubtedly a lot of tiresome pedantry in Rousseau ; but there is also, as there is in Goethe, a certain power of concentrating upon lonely cosmic emotions which I think is of eternal value. Such emotions, and the cold, non-human detachment that dedicates itself to enjoy them, strike the herd-humour of the crowd as grotesque and the herd-humour of the academician as immoral and anti-social.

But there are other dominant human traditions, besides this of the mob-sense of humour, that it would be necessary for the philosophy I am roughly delineating to undermine with its passive scepticism. The next imperative I might name is the duty of what is called serving humanity. Now, I have already admitted that we all have to "bear the burden" and pay back to society, in some honest work or some honest entertainment, the price of the food and shelter it gives us. But when this has been done—when we have, so to speak, paid for our board and lodging—we are surely free to confront the universe that surrounds us on our own terms ! If the idea of helping humanity forward, as the phrase runs, upon its steady evolutionary upgrade leaves one entirely cold—if the whole idea of such "active service" seems negligible and tiresome, compared with an inward life of concentrated contemplation—why, then, the new epicurean philosophy we require must sink its metaphysical shaft deep enough to get in touch with levels of planetary, sensational life so thrilling and so satisfying, that they carry their own justification with them.

The next ideal tradition which our philosophy will have to undermine with its weary, passive, serpentine "old-soul" scepticism will be what is called "the pursuit of truth." Now, I think it is sufficiently clear that to a lonely consciousness suspended in a self-created circle of deliberately chosen objects of contemplation, there will be no conceivable occasion for "pursuing truth." With a scepticism a good deal deeper than the flippant Pilate's—with a scepticism that possesses something of the heroic isolation of Christ Himself, who announced that He Himself *was* the truth—the philosophy I am struggling in so many round-about ways to approach, will be freed from the necessity of "pursuing truth" by the fact that it is already, through the medium of a vast number of phantasmal dream-worlds, staring with both malicious defiance and ecstatic gratitude directly at the First Cause. If one is already, from the hollow shell of one's immense loneliness, staring stoically and defiantly at the face of the ultimate creative power, one is, to put it very humbly, in the position of a disillusioned flea, sucking the blood of the great World-Dreamer ! One is, that is to say, already in enjoyment of "the truth." The question for a lonely god-devourer of this sort is not, What is Truth ? but, What, among the countless masks of truth flickering before us, are the particular phantom-groupings upon which we shall elect to brood ?

The next traditional human ideal that it would be necessary to undermine would be the conventional conception of Beauty as something revealed to the æsthetic initiate and hidden from the barbarian. To

the ichthyosaurus-ego brooding with cold interlunar ecstasy upon its terraqueous sensations, *all* its elemental feelings, so long as they produce in it the particular kind of happiness it desires, are touched, though not equally touched, by that strange glamour, that simple dignity, that fleeting magic which we have come to call beauty.

Nor need we reluct, in this dropping-down of our spiritual plummet into the abysses of the lonely soul, at being forced to face the problem of love also. Here again it is necessary to revolt against the normal traditional human attitude toward this universal mystery. The phenomenon of "love," as popularly understood, is a psycho-physical attraction, generally between persons of opposite sexes, resulting, with any luck, in an amorous partnership, wherein the two enamoured beings, essentially free and independent, seek some working-compromise between their divergent self interests and their mutual attraction. All the vulgar popular jokes about marriage and jealousy imply this clash of opposite, equal, and essentially unreconciled antagonists.

But the sort of "love" that lends itself to the lonely egoism I am here advocating has not the very slightest resemblance to this stirring and lively compromise between enamoured opposites. When between two lovers (each of them an egoist, but one a man and one a woman) there is established the real harmony whose consummation is implied in the nature of each, all conflict, all difference, all equality ceases. *The male possesses the female* ; and throughout all eternity this

“ act of possession ” (of the psychic-physical sort that *can* be continued *sans cesse* as long as the two are left alone) produces in both of them a long-drawn-out ecstasy of magical content.

This ecstasy swings for ever backwards and forwards, like the motion of an everlasting pendulum or the advance and retreat of the sea-tide. The male hath his Beatific Vision in his unremitted possession of the female : she in her unremitted passivity in being thus possessed. Their mutual ecstasy is something that isolates them from all the rest of the universe. They come to resemble that strange double-natured being to whom Plato in his *Symposium* makes such fanciful and playful reference. Before they met each other, they went about through the world maimed, abortive, disillusioned, quasi-moribund. But now that they *have* met, they have become two in one. They have come to resemble those two horned flames, in whose inseparable conjunction Dante beheld the eternal fate of Ulysses and Diomed ! It is, indeed, as if, enclosed in the same hollow opalescent shell of ecstatic isolation, the male held the female in a perpetual trance, while the female, responding to this act of possession in an eternal dream of abandoned self-immolation, would as soon perish as awaken !

Love of this kind—shall I name it ichthyosaurus-love or super-human love?—could endure in exactly the same psychic-physical state without a flicker of change—the male possessing, the female possessed—for thousands of years. It is a clear proof that the patient and subtle Marcel Proust was emotionally very limited,

that he should be continually insisting that change and novelty and jealousy and disturbance should be so necessary to love. He approaches most nearly to the truth when he describes his hero's feelings as he watches Albertine asleep. Here he came very near to the secret of this high-low, this up-and-down, this mystic-sensuous, this sub- and super-human feeling. For the love of two really lonely human creatures who are absolutely satisfied with each other, is like an encounter between life and death, between Being and Not-Being, between day and night. What makes such an encounter so great a thing is that it is the blending of two eternal dialogues in a fivefold eternal dialogue. It is therefore an absolute living quincunx—the number which, according to Sir Thomas Browne, is the most lucky of all. Each of the two lovers is a self confronting a not-self. Each of the two keeps up its indignant dialogue with their First Cause, which is, of course, the hypothetical substratum of every inflowing impression composing both their not-selves. And in addition to this, each converses consciously or unconsciously with the other. Every pair of real lovers in this deep physical-metaphysical embrace make up a third entity, the united multiple dialogue of which with the First Cause—a dialogue of alternate gratitude and indignation—is the cumulative voice of the *Number Five*. The vast mass of animals, fishes, reptiles, plants, share in this universal planetary love-making and in its fivefold ecstasy. No human speech is theirs ; but a vibration radiates from every such perfect embrace, which creates a new pattern in the fluctuating tapestry of the wind-blown cosmos.

Each pair of lovers, isolated in its planetary shell, is for ever gathering more and more magnetic power wherewith to enjoy the good and to defy the evil of that ultimate First Cause which is responsible—through the medium of Chance—for their ever having come together at all. Never for one second do they forgive this First Cause for the horrible suffering which they know exists around them. From their united ecstasy there is for ever projected a protest against this suffering, and an out-jetting godlike command—quivering with the good-will of their own chance-favoured happiness—that this suffering should be lessened and that all living sentiences should attain pardon and peace.

It is not necessary that each pair of human lovers who embrace in this way should be to outward semblance of opposite sex. All males have a psychic ingredient in them that is feminine. All females have a psychic ingredient in them that is masculine. The outer semblance matters nothing. The opinions of the world, the contemptible prejudices of the vulgar herd, the traditions of a particular age or country, count, in these high planetary matters, for nothing—for less than nothing! The mystic-sensuous embrace that binds such lovers together and that isolates them in a heavenly loneliness, need not result in the begetting or the conception of any offspring. This matter of bearing offspring, of the reproduction of the species, is a mere accidental by-play. It is miraculous enough. It is one of Nature's most inscrutable mysteries. But the grand miracle is not to be looked for in such issues, upshots,

and by plays. The grand miracle is to be looked for in consciousness itself—in the fact that two eternally lonely consciousnesses can embrace in such complete reciprocity at all. This is so vast a mystery that it is no wonder it should sometimes result in the creation of an altogether new being. But such a new being is only one of the unbounded cosmic mutations, which, like foam-bubbles from the turning of a magic water-wheel, float away upon the tide of life from the *energeia akinesis* of so heavenly an event.

Nothing of all this can be realised in its abysmal significance until the various human imperatives which drive us forward into our trifling activities like a herd of frightened sheep, have been undermined by a really formidable cosmic scepticism. We no sooner attain intelligent consciousness than a host of fussy, laborious, moralistic “ purposes of life ” are thrust upon us. We unfold our tremulous leaves of silent, sensitive being—so infinitely more precious in themselves than any moral purposes or material achievements can possibly be—and before they have begun to breathe the lovely wandering airs with their calm, immortal, vegetable passivity, behold, they are pinched and pruned and pushed into some tiresome “ human purpose ” ! Why, these precious shoots of life—calm, dreamy, self-subsistent, egocentric, isolated, like the planets themselves in their great easy orbits—are, *as they are*, without doing anything at all, far more important in this great, strange system of universes than any conceivable human achievement ! The time has come for a new revolt—the revolt of the vegetable element in us against

the hot fevers of both human practicality and human idealism.

There is *that* in us that has for ten thousand years secretly desired to rebel against this human tyranny. Let it find speech now, even if it be blundering and illogical.

The only wise human philosophers are the early pre-Socratic Greeks ; and these profound soothsayers, whose planetary clairvoyance has never been equalled since—Heraclitus, Democritus, Pythagoras, Empedocles—they are all great *amphibiums*, with one foot on the sandy shore of the traditions of humanity, and the other in the salt-sea of our non-human cosmos.

It is not absolutely necessary, in order to taste the deliciousness of the fivefold vision, for the two lovers to be together. If the mystic-sensuous element in their love be really strong, neither fate nor destiny can undo what the First Cause, through the medium of pure chance, has done. Time and space, in fact, have no longer any power to separate them when once they have met. This is no fantastic, idealistic, romantic moonshine. It is a law of living consciousness, a psychochemical law. All lovers will bear witness to this. Not to be vividly aware of the other in any separation is a sign that love has changed into affection or into lust or into both. It has ceased to be real love. Real lovers, whether they be of opposite sexes or not, go to and fro over the face of the earth in a delicate and delicious trance. Each of the two of them can eat nothing but the other eats too—can drink nothing but the other drinks too. They can breathe no air, however

far-travelled it may be, but the spirit of the other is diffused throughout its undulating presence. And since the mystic-sensuous embrace that holds them together implies the double self and the double not-self, it implies further that the whole "square of love" is turned toward the unknown First Cause and is in communion with it in the final completion of the planetary quincunx. Thus it follows that each of them will share the other's contemplations, and have thoughts, fancies, feelings, and sensations in common with the other. Here, indeed, lies the whole secret of love and the clue whereby you may know whether your lust and your tenderness have sunk deep enough to have been transformed into this mysterious and final bond.

For the sort of love I am speaking of now can only come once in a person's lifetime. One may have many affections and many lusts, many long devotions and many poignant spasms of pity ; but one can have only one love. In each of us there is a psychic-sensuous scar whose arbitrary outlines form an organic pattern. This pattern resembles the ragged indentations left on both sides of empty space when a single piece of paper is roughly torn in half. Each of these two torn edges, in the majority of human instances, is pinned or gummed or glued to a foreign torn edge, alien, ill-fitting ! But sometimes, although it is rare, *the edges fit*. When they do so, it is more than a smooth and even piece of paper that results ; for, behold, there are living hieroglyphs upon the page—letters of air, water, and fire, writ in the inscrutable language of the gods—and this mystic lettering, as well as the material substance

upon which it is written, fits itself together without a flaw !

It will easily be seen from all this that the nature of this love, partaking as it does of the vegetable world as well as the super-conscious world, belongs to something larger than humanity. It belongs indeed to creative forces in the multiple of universes that surround us, which go very deep and very far. What we call the First Cause is the necessary centre of all these universes ; and back and down into the First Cause every living soul can descend. When, however, two identities are linked together in this mystic-sensuous embrace, it is a double soul that thus sinks down ; and a double anger against the evil it finds there, and a double gratitude for the good it finds there, floods this pair of conscious beings.

They are as lonely, so far as the rest of humanity is concerned, in their planetary embrace, as they were lonely in their planetary isolation. They are as liberated from the active imperatives of human tradition as they were before. Indeed, they are more liberated ; for it is with a double magnetism that they create an ice-cold circumference around them, through which no warm, gregarious, human interests can invade their central peace.

What a flood of lovely relief and liberation flows through us when we realise that we can revolt from the tyranny of humanity—when we realise that we can project our identity backwards into that vegetable world which is in so many ways superior to the human race, as well as forward into that world of arbitrary,

wayward gods, of whose real existence the old mythologies prophesied !

Strange affiliated emanations, rousing deep nervous responses in our nature, reach us from the sun and the moon and from the heavenly bodies. Nothing grows upon the earth, nothing flies through the air or swims in the sea, but it is linked by some subtle magnetic link to the lonely life of our own soul.

In revolting, on behalf of the free-will of the individual soul, against the gregarious traditions of humanity, there is nothing so necessary to undermine and explode as the tyrannical assumptions of science. The machinery created by science is something that proceeds from the active curiosity of man and the active energy of man, concentrated into a nature-dominating herd. Individuals originate it ; but the anonymous, gregarious Monster, the Human Swarm, quickly snatches it from their hands and turns it into the dead-alive routine of a mechanical system. Human life, dominated by science, becomes year by year more closely akin to an ant-heap or a wasp-nest. And the same evil power that transforms our spiritual freedom into a hideous commercial-industrial slavery, does its best to strike with paralysis and atrophy our faith in the power of the individual soul ! The defeatism of economic determinism, the defeatism of material behaviourism, the defeatism of mathematical logic—all these play into the hands of our industrial system in the same devilish campaign to make “ the star Wormwood ” prevail, and to take the creative force out of the soul !

The real wisdom of the gods is something that

enables us to make light of everything in science—except perhaps of one single thing. I refer to the administering of anæsthetics ! The wisdom of the gods gives us the wit to see that the whole urge of scientific curiosity is a negligible and unimportant matter, leading to results quite as evil as they are good. The only exception to this is, as I have said, the mitigation of human suffering, of actual, physical, human pain. But this, after all, is only a small portion of what science has done. Let science leave us her anæsthetics ; let her add a few yet more painless, and yet more easily obtainable death-potions than she has already given, and then let her leave the human soul alone and withdraw whence she came ! It is quite clear that, except perhaps in Russia, she has been prostituted to every conceivable base end.

It is, as we say, “ quite on the cards ” that she will enable humanity in some future “ great war ” to commit its final suicide—a suicide as sordid, as spiteful, as meaningless, as base, as the suicide of a swarm of insects. One can only hope that by the time she does so every living man, woman, and child will have been enabled to carry about with it a little glass bottle—suspended perhaps round every human neck—the contents of which would liberate us, in one swift painless euthanasia, from the annoyance of being interrupted in our contemplation of sun, moon, earth, and sea by her curiosities, her inventions, her mechanics !

What the lonely consciousness—that feels as if it had had so many avatars as to have become utterly sceptical of all progress—desires most, is the privilege of being

left alone, alone to forget what it chooses to forget, to remember what it chooses to remember, to love what it chooses to love. About it and around it are endless levels and dimensions of being. The mystery of life extends, inwardly and outwardly, far beyond the circumference of the astronomical universe, far beyond the circumference of time and space. The lonely consciousness that has not learned to be sceptical of every human tradition, will never acquire that drastic faith in its own powers that enables it to exercise those powers and assert itself as a god among other gods.

We must pay back to humanity what we owe to it—for food, for shelter, for protection from the elements, from savage animals, from savage men, from disease, from pestilence, from famine. We owe to it our daily labour. We owe to it our honesty, our kindness, our good-will. What we do *not* owe to it is the thoughts, feelings, and sensations with which we contemplate the universe. These are our own. These are the *raison d'être* of our existence. These are our “purpose of life.”

Take the case of a youth who is lying in some city flat by the side of his sleeping sweetheart. In her sleep the girl abandons herself to his caresses. He possesses her body. He possesses her soul. He is thrilled throughout his whole nature by the fact of such possession. And she, even in her sleep, is equally happy at being possessed. Before they slept they beheld the great mystic circle of the full moon, balanced like a vast silver coin of “the emperor of the universe” upon the edge of an opposite roof. Warm yellow sunshine now falls in a clear-cut pattern upon the wall above his companion's

head, full of hints and memories of aromatic pine-needles, hidden white violets, cool-rooted ferns, and fragrant moss. It is Sunday morning, let us say, and not yet time for the young man to get up and clean out the grate or make the fire.

What in such moments of pure leisure will he do with his thoughts? He has awaked from sleep fresh, happy, irresponsible. That great magical moon floats in his memory like a water-lily in an unruffled lake. Those yellow bars of warm, palpable sunshine, falling so lightly upon the wall, seem to embody all the fragrant early mornings that have ever courted his drowsy eyelids. And what has he got to respond to these miracles of delight? *Consciousness!* He has got consciousness—a far greater miracle than any outward impression. And this consciousness of his, using his bodily sense—that fivefold gate into Paradise—is as delicate and delicious a thing, with as wonderful petal-curves, shell-convolutes, quivering antennæ, and unfolding fronds, as any organism in all the innumerable universes. So he lies, in unvexed, unbroken sensuous ecstasy. He is like a god in space. He is like a brackish plant in a great, shimmering, silent morass of peaceful vegetation, over which the grey clouds are heaped up, and the sun is slanting down.

He has, of necessity, to protect his felicity by a conscious act of forgetting—of forgetting, ah, so much! He has to forget the miseries, the starvations, the unspeakable cruelties that are occurring, *even at this very minute*, all over the planet Earth. But he has already faced this necessity. Honestly and shamelessly he has

faced it. He knows now that if he gave full rein to his imaginative pity, the mere existence of one single unhappy creature would be enough to damn his peace. He knows that if all conscious beings gave way to this passionate universal pity, there would never be one single happy moment known by any single consciousness upon the terraqueous globe. He has resolved, on the contrary, that there *shall* be many of such moments ! He will defy the cruel First Cause the while he enjoys that Cause's creation !

So he lies in his happiness. And then begins the attack ! Certain crowding, bustling, feverish demons rush down the chimney upon him. Under the door they squeeze ; through the window they climb. Like those abominable devils described by Rabelais, who sought to destroy the peace of the impious death-bed of the old poet, they whirl around this sleep-purged sensitivity, shooting out a thousand poison-tongues at his happiness, clawing villainously with their filthy nails, both at himself and at his sleeping girl.

One hot human devil tells him that he must remember his career. Another reminds him of the importance of money. An elderly nondescript devil-dancer bawls in the boy's ear a lot of ideal poppycock about the importance of supporting Art and pursuing the Beautiful. Another lean imp rattles off, hugger-mugger, "inferiority complex," "polymorphous perverse," "introvert-extravert," "rationalisation." But the most insidious one is a very old and very lachrymose devil, dressed up to resemble Count Tolstoy, who stands in a long, awful silence at the foot of the bed, and then,

nodding his brows like a Chinese mandarin, repeats a hundred times over, in a lugubrious chant, " Love humanity, love humanity, love humanity, love humanity ! " until the poor boy feels actually very sick in the pit of his stomach.

Such a case as this would be reproduced, only with a difference, if we entered into the feelings of the girl rather than of the boy. In her case there would be a further complication. She would be far less affected by either the democratic devil or the Tolstoy-devil. But the thousand-and-one practical problems of their ménage and of the safety of their account at the savings-bank would probably begin troubling her mind soon after she opened her eyes. All these details of their life are, as one knows, exactly ten times more real to her than they are to him. It was, no doubt, with a vague, half-conscious desire to have all this human child's-play made to seem so real, that he solidified their love by taking this attic. Little did he dream, one may easily surmise, the full extent of the unknown " reality " which he thus invoked ! But at the moments of its most petrifying solidity, we may be sure he loved to have it so. He loved to have it so—even as a child is thrilled in a peculiar sense, when a grown-up person (of the sort that is clairvoyant in such things) joins in its game. The look of their attic, the preparation of their meals, the making of their bed, the division of their weekly salary—all these things are to the boy just simply a delicious, intoxicating game, totally devoid of any deep reality. But the more real a game *seems*, the more exciting it is. So this extraordinary human being, with the

soft flesh and softer eyes, who seems able to make it more real than a person would suppose possible, is the most perfect of creatures to play with.

But, although with less vigorous mental absorption than his, the girl too can, if she so desires, concentrate her consciousness on the miracle of their being stretched out there side by side. She too can "make herself forget" the cares and annoyances of the crowded human hours about to begin. She too can, in the ecstasy of their amorous association, float back, down the long stream of evolution, till in her feelings she reaches, though without knowing what it is, the calm, delicious, unimpassioned, non-personal "loves of the plants" !

I find myself constantly tempted to use the expression "mystic-sensuousness" for the philosophy of the senses which I am advocating. But it must be remembered that there enters into this mystic-sensuousness no element of sentimental idealism or even of emotional idealism. Stoically and defiantly will the ego I am considering oppose itself to the misery of its prison in a machine-age, and gather to its obstinate heart that visible or invisible mate whose personality is its inmost possession. Together, by the use of their creative-destructive memory, they will convert these steel walls into green pastures, and these steel cog-wheels into still waters ; and their hateful jailers they will reduce to invisibility as if they were "airy nothings" !

Once again let it be said that the purpose of life for every conscious ichthyosaurus-soul is a peculiar sort of stoical happiness—not *any* kind of happiness, but the

sort that has its weapons of defiance ready ! It is very hard to define the kind of attitude that thus gathers together its forces and resolves never to cease from enjoying life. It seems as if, in the first place, it were an intense, vivid, defiant consciousness of one's own identity, pitted against chance and fate and accident. It seems as if it were a steadily-increasing consciousness of one's power to endure the blows of fate, and of one's power to derive a thrilling pleasure from the simple things of one's diurnal experience.

But it also seems, as it were, the power of summoning up out of *oneself*, out of the depths of oneself, a stoical resistant mood that brings with it inevitably, just because it is defiant, a certain degree of pleasure. Suppose, for example, you were shut up in a chamber of steel, and fed daily with two meals of bread-and-water. One portion of your happiness in such a situation would be a resistant, defiant feeling, called up from the depths of your own being. Another portion of it would be your contemplation of the steel walls of your prison, and of your expectation of each new appearance of your jailer with the bread-and-water. But neither of these sources of defiant happiness would exhaust your armoury. If you have cultivated in your soul the genius of loneliness, you would feel your resources of resistance to be by no means limited to those of a member of the human tribe ! It would be a sturdy and formidable *tree* that they have imprisoned here ! It would be a composed and crafty panther, biding its time : a wily, self-subsistent serpent, coiled inscrutably upon itself : a patient toad, deriving its pleasure from the mere fact

that it is still a live toad and not yet a dead toad. And you would have much more formidable, much more occult well-springs of power than any of these flowing in upon you from the unknown dimensions of life. If you have practised certain secret mental tricks with your mind, you would feel a confidence that you yourself possess a singular magnetic power—demonic, non-human—which gives you a kind of disdain for all the cruel scientific prisons of the spiteful, vindictive, mob-loving human race.

And whether your love, your mate, be with you in this steel prison or not, she *will* be with you in your mind. In your mind she *is* with you. In *her* mind, wherever she may be physically, she is with you. You possess her, and she is possessed by you. You possess her in some strange deep sense, such as all the vicious mob-cruelty of the human race cannot meddle with.

One may freely admit that if the secret of life is to be found in this sort of ichthyosaurus-loneliness, it must be the loneliness of a *good ichthyosaurus* ! Simple, natural kindness, the instinct to protect, to cherish, is not confined to the human race. Dogs, cats, horses, even some of the wild beasts, display this instinct. Affection that fulfils itself and satisfies itself, by taking upon itself the egoism of another sentiency, existed before humanity appeared upon the scene, and will doubtless exist long after humanity has vanished away. The pompous evolutionary chatter about "letting the ape and tiger die" from amid our human instincts disallows the obvious fact that man is more deliberately cruel to man than any bird or any beast to *their* kind. Man's

rivals in cruelty are the insects, whose existence, except for that of the butterfly and perhaps of the bee, contains almost as many sinister elements as his own. Let us revolt and escape from this entomological slavery !

What the individual soul, out of the depths of its magical wizardry and sorcery, can reach, in the direction of godlike loneliness, knows no limit. The moment any lonely human spirit isolates itself from all the traditions of its race, and assimilates its consciousness to that of animal-life and vegetable-life, lying back upon the magnetic, planetary pulses and giving itself up to the calm, reiterated movements of the elements, there slowly steals over it a faint, dim sense of godlike possibilities such as contain hints of an ecstasy beyond anything our mystics have yet described.

The narrow, conceited, human pessimism produced by a slavish respect for the latest fancies of modern science, is something so stupid and academic, that no free mind that has ever dared to experiment with its own possibilities will give it more than a passing amused attention. Those miraculous and sudden mutations in biological form, which the evolutionists cannot explain and never have explained, may easily be due to the same concentration of experimental free-will in some particular organism, as my solitary ichthyosaurus-ego, lying on his bed, watching the sun upon his wall, or working in his shop in a sort of absent-minded waking-dream, practises in his slow, saurian contemplation !

The hot, feverish, gregarious, conscience-stricken urge of humanity is forever driving us on to work with more and more acquisitive and serviceable zeal. In direct

opposition to this, the nobler self in us is prepared to give up our money, in order to provide others with food, shelter, and self-respect. This is the only true goodness : this is the only true charity : this is the virtue of loneliness and the genuine morality of true egoism. Than such goodness as this there is nothing better in the whole world of human relationships. And there is only one thing nobler than this ; namely to perish oneself in saving some other organism. All other interference and meddling with human creatures is an impertinence and an inversion of life's inviolable rights. The good man gives away the money and asks no questions. The evil man meddles, interferes, and insists on regulating a person's life.

V

There is in Nature, as I have already hinted, a great open secret that might be called the spiritual metaphysic of sub-human and super-human emotion. This secret lies in the fact that every identity in the universe is a self-creating god, consciously able, like the mythical Proteus, to change the character of its mental being. No mental consciousness is limited by its bodily frame. Round every visible physical form there extends an invisible aura that may, for all we know, have the power of surviving the death of the body. It is this invisible emanation, composed, it may well be, of subtle electrical vibrations, that can be *actually changed* by the concentrated effort of a formidable free-will. The "invisible form" of many a human person—if it were visible to ordinary sight—would appear in the shape of a fish, a reptile, a bird, a beast, a demon, or a god.

Scientific philosophy makes the tedious mistake of assuming that there is such a thing as a universally palpable "real world." There is no such "real world." What is called "the real world" is an illusion created by those self-destructive negative moments of sinking into the social ant-heap when as lonely individuals we *cease to live*—in other words, when we cease to re-create our particular universes according to our imaginative will-power.

There is no such thing as chemical or electrical force

apart from the bodies and souls of living creatures. Every portion of every universe is a portion of the body of some conscious or semi-conscious being. We cannot make the least movement of mind or body without impinging upon the existence of some other mind or some other body ; and therefore the ideal life for all of us—and the only profoundly happy life—is to remain absolutely still. By remaining absolutely still, and simply contemplating what is immediately around us, we fulfil the ultimate purpose of our being. Only by such motionlessness and such stillness can we attain real solitude. Only by such motionlessness and stillness can we drink the godlike nepenthe of “ deep and liquid rest, forgetful of all ill.” To attain this stillness, however, a perpetual mental warfare is necessary.

The only lasting happiness, whether for plants, beasts, or men, is in solitude and peace. Such solitude includes the embrace of love. Such peace is obtained by the art of forgetting. The self selects what portion of the not-self it wishes to contemplate, and it deliberately forgets all else. No conceivable change in the mechanical conditions of human life could make any difference to this ultimate attitude. Man might invent machines that could transport him through the heart of the earth to the Antipodes. He might invent machines that would render a visit to the moon as natural as a visit to Asia or Africa. But what difference in the essential happiness of a living being would exploits of this kind make ? None whatever ! Wherever he went he would still remain the same old essential self contemplating the bodily forms of other selves. The chemical constitution of the

particular not-self he confronted would be very much the same, were it a piece of scoriac rock in Prospect Park, or a piece of scoriac rock on the surface of the moon ! Varieties of appearance in the physical nature of the not-self are not so very important, so long as the soul is a worshipper of Memory and can call up at will magical and lovely scenes, even under the most disgusting conditions, and reduce the horrors of life to invisibility by a deliberate use of the proud sorcery of oblivion. If the swarming ant-heaps of humanity succeeded with their electrical machines in getting even further than the moon—if they managed to establish a colony on the flame-tinged coasts of Mars—they would still remain, in the midst of all such enterprises, the same crowds, fussy, feverish, boastful, spiteful, unhappy, frivolous, and cruel.

In the same way, a solitary human soul, disembarking upon some high lunar promontory, would be exactly what he was before he set off, capable of the same ecstasies, susceptible to the same miseries, contemplating the same First Cause. He could not set eyes upon anything that was not electrical or chemical—in other words, that was not made of what used to be called “matter.” If one dislikes the forms of material substance presented to one’s attention on Fifth Avenue, one can reduce them to invisibility and make use of one’s memory. If one dislikes the forms of material substance that claim one’s attention upon the surface of the moon, one can reduce *these also* to invisibility, and once more make use of one’s memory. The purpose of life does not consist in conquering Nature : it consists in fulfilling

the secret intentions of Nature. And the intention of Nature is a particular kind of contemplation.

What are the most beautiful moments in the lives of the creatures of earth, both as *they* feel them and as *we* watch them? Always the contemplative moments! However fiercely they hunt for their food, however voraciously they devour their food, there come certain moments to plants, fish, reptiles, birds, and beasts when they are simply *enjoying themselves*, given up entirely to vague, dreamy, delicious, contemplative sensuousness. Watch a dog when he is enjoying the pleasure of a run across-country. When he is actually in pursuit, he will utter desperate yelping cries, of a tone that betrays so intense an agitation, that it sounds more like distress than excitement. But when there is no maddening scent on the clear air, how happily he snuffs it! With how large and leisurely a zest for life he swings his tail amid the tall grasses!

But there are still many noble human feelings unspoiled by crowd instincts. The psychic sensuousness of which my ichthyosaurus-ego in its wilful loneliness makes such a cult, leads to a mood that might be called "the contemplation-essence" of the generations. By this I mean that a certain number of physical phenomena—such as fire and rain and snow and moonlight and earth-mould and sea-sand and river-reeds and chimney-smoke and candle-light—have gathered about them such a rich deposit of human associations, that they have come to suggest, like the cross-handle of a sword, or the blade of a plough, or the circle of a marriage-ring, the purged and winnowed residuum of human

life upon earth. This quintessence of existence, this "contemplation-essence," lies hid, like a vase of precious, tragical-sweet potpourri, in the inherited memory of the race, ready to be aroused, under certain conditions, in any individual's soul. Here, perhaps, we find the explanation of the peculiar thrill that the old anonymous ballads produce in us ; for they, and they alone in all literature except the Iliad and the Odyssey, are saturated through and through with this "contemplation-essence" of the generations.

Let us put the case bluntly and directly. Some overworked city-clerk is glancing up at the window of his office, watching the march of white clouds across the sky, or the slow falling of snowflakes upon the sill. To his employer the purpose of this man's life is effective, industrious activity. To his wife it may well be the bringing home of a sufficient income. But in reality it is neither of these things. The man's industry is just the price which he pays for the various benefits that he gets from belonging to human society. The money he earns is the price he pays for the satisfaction of having found so dear a mate. But the purpose of his life—the great indescribable cosmic purpose of all life—is only attained in those rare felicitous moments when, gazing pensively *away from his work*, he suddenly experiences the ecstasy of this "contemplation-essence."

At these moments a thousand years of human life are gathered into one convulsive beat of the heart of Time. There well up within him vague, delicious feelings from a memory much older than his own memory—from the memory, in fact, of the cumulated lives of all his

ancestors. And more than that ! For in these feelings, in this “ contemplation-essence,” lies hid many a deep, atavistic reversion to æons of animal-life—yes, and to still remoter æons of vegetable and even mineral life ! Why is it that certain human beings, as we casually encounter them, produce in us a wonderful sense of peace and calm—a peace that is inexplicable in the mere terms of the person’s human character, a calm that resembles with singular closeness the unruffled aura of rest that emanates from rocks and stones and trees ? It often happens that we are conscious, too, of something else in such human presences—conscious of an indescribable premonition of a super-human, god-like calm, that seems to flow, not from the Past, but from the Future—an augury and a presage of a condition of mentality completely outside “ the fever and the fret ” of all that we are experiencing now.

It is clear that if we regard the enjoyment of these “ contemplation-essences ” as the sole purpose of our days, it will make little difference to us under what economic or political régime we live. If our ego were the ego of a good and kind “ ichthyosaurus-self,” it would undoubtedly feel more at ease in a régime (like that of the Communists) where the sole object of the power of the State was to increase the well-being of the masses of the people. The less poverty—the less misery—it saw around it and knew to exist around it, the more easy would it find it to forget the horrors of life. But in the abolition of such misery, it would be entirely free from doctrinaire scruples or principles. It would welcome

dictatorship willingly, or any sort of benevolent despotism, so long as such an authority made it possible for every living creature to enjoy, according to its needs, all the primary necessities. For among these necessities, leisure for the contemplation of such essences as I have described would rank after food and shelter and warmth and sex-love.

I find myself repeatedly using such terms as “mystic sensuousness” and “psychic sensuousness” to describe the desired consummation. In like manner I find myself using such an expression as “a certain particular kind of happiness,” or, again, “a certain particular kind of ecstasy.” It is, however, of the first importance to the trend of my argument to make it clear that the “sensations” I have in mind do not imply any *ideal* mysticism, and that the “happiness” I have in mind does not imply any relation except that of the conscious self to some sort of not-self, and behind that not-self to some hypothetical First Cause of them both.

No, the sort of contemplation that is the purpose of life for the ichthyosaurus-ego is not mystical in any but a very concrete sense. Such an ego will find itself sceptical about any “spiritual ideal” right down to the very depths of its abysmal surveying of its strange cosmic environment. It will say to itself, “Well, so *that* is what *this* mask of reality looks like!” It will say to itself, “Well, so *those* are the groups of objects and events which *this* phantasmagoric mirror contains!” Even confronted with the hypothetical First Cause itself—that good-evil and very ambiguous Absolute—it will retain its shameless “old-soul” humour of a

somewhat Chinese complexion. It will be profane enough, in fact, to confront even this Essence of Essences with a certain fastidiousness and a certain cautious detachment. In other words, even in the final "abyss of abysses," so long as it retains a shred of its familiar, individual consciousness, it will remain hard and cold and compact enough to dominate its emotional wonder and awe ; and, while it contemplates what it chooses to contemplate, it will also forget what it chooses to forget. If, for example, the nature of the supreme First Cause, at which it now gazes, contains certain evil aspects, only too reminiscent—which is indeed certain !—of what we know upon earth, it will be defiant of these aspects and, if possible, oblivious of them, the while it gives itself up to the contemplation of what is rich and strange and exciting in this great Being's nature.

It cannot be insisted upon too often that the sort of calm, unruffled contemplation that I am advocating as the purpose of life, can be practised in every conceivable situation of human life. A railway-porter can practise it. An engineer can practise it. A miner can practise it. A farm-labourer can practise it. A soldier or a sailor can practise it. A factory-worker or a shop-assistant can practise it. Even a banker can practise it—although it is probable that the hired-man who works in his garden has a much better opportunity for such a deep, secret, magical-sensuous state of being than his master. But a carpenter armed with his hammer, or a plumber with his wrench, can easily come to a point where he regards his skill at his job, and the pleasure he

finds in it, as mere amateur-irrelevances, necessarily undertaken for money or because of some peculiar interest he feels for such things, but of quite secondary importance in the general swing of his life, compared with this larger and more constant feeling.

There are many witnesses to the primary importance of the ecstasy of religion and the ecstasy of love over the practical details of even the most necessary job. But the importance of the sort of contemplation I am describing is far greater than religion or love, because it renders the lonely ego entirely independent of external personalities—independent of affection, independent of friends, independent of the gods, and even independent of the dark side of the First Cause Itself. And above all, it renders a person independent of the opinion of the world. We all have a desire to get fame, to get glory, or at least to get some adequate recognition of our talents and personality. But for those who take the trouble to acquire this contemplative mood, these things matter much less than for other men.

They naturally matter a little—even to the lonely ichthyosaurus-ego ! It is nice to be liked. It is nice to be admired. It is nice to have one's fur, or feathers, *or scales*, stroked the right way. But really and truly, if one's happiness consists—and if the purpose of one's whole life consists—in a certain calm, psychic-sensuous enjoyment, this matter of one's prestige and reputation will play a very small part. One's attitude to such things will resemble the attitude of the impassioned voluptuary who in the midst of his enchanted dalliance learns

that he has inherited a title, or the attitude of the enraptured saint who, drunk with the Beatific Vision, learns that he has been elevated to a bishopric !

When one meditates upon the various commercial activities of modern life, it becomes clear that only a limited number of these exertions are essential to the main issue—the issue of feeding, clothing, and housing the inhabitants of the earth. Put the case that a large majority of earth-dwellers were suddenly converted—and such a proposition, in these chaotic times, is not nearly as fantastic as it sounds—to a new way of life, a way advocated by some formidable and irresistible Prophet, is it not conceivable that industrial production would be limited to necessity, rather than dissipated upon luxury ? The sensual pleasure of amorousness, of eating and drinking, of gambling, of athletics, of sport, of gregarious diversions of a hundred kinds, already soften and mitigate the frantic zeal of commercial undertakings. If a growing number of human beings got it lodged in their minds that the only way of being happy was to acquire a certain secret habit—a trick, in fact, of enjoying life that was more thrilling than any other, but which implied a contempt for ambition—is it not possible that the mania for success and for reputation would grow materially less, and that a wiser set of values would, little by little, install themselves among us ?

Such a new set of values, laying the stress upon contemplation rather than upon action, would not by any means be a concession to Oriental metaphysic or to Hindoo mysticism. It would be an entirely different

cult from these, because it would be, in the first place shamelessly egoistic, and in the second place shamelessly sensuous. There would be nothing "spiritual" about it. It would be poetical rather than ideal. It would also be childishly simple in its distinctions between good and evil, the good being simply *good-will* and the evil simply *malicious will* and the will to cruelty.

The hour has surely come in the history of the human race when the individual can assert his right to establish for himself a purpose of life that is independent of traditional human values. So long as this new purpose of life recognises that it must, so to speak, *pay its rent*—in other words, earn its own living and be kind and good—there is no earthly reason why it should be afraid of mob-estimates and crowd-judgments—no reason why it should give a thought to acquiring reputation among men.

Among these traditional human values which it may be advisable to discard is, as I have already hinted, a certain vein of worldly-minded humour. Now, although in the hands of Shakespeare or Sterne or Dickens or Charlie Chaplin *popular humour* can touch the absolute and be as beautiful as the finest poetry, as a rule the part played by what is called humour in our lives is to beat, bully, and suppress all that is most original in us. Humour is the cudgel wherewith the average man keeps the imagination of the un-average man in its place.

This very essay on the value of contemplation will in all probability be hated by the average professional humorist more than by any other mortal. Charlie

Chaplin, however, would probably be sympathetic toward it. The notion of using the word "ichthyosaurus-ego" as a philosophical symbol would in all likelihood enormously tickle his fancy. Will Rogers, on the contrary, would see in it an epitome of everything he loathed most. To him, and to all humorists of his type, it would appear as a pompous unreality, a solemn and priggish affectation, a mad and meaningless pose. Of all human traditions by far the most insidious is this commonplace sense of humour. What George Meredith—whose strenuous cleverness never really lifts him above the moralistic commonplace—praises so highly, namely *the sense of the Comic*, is only a smart-Aleck intellectualising of this same popular facetiousness. The humour of Rabelais, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Dickens, and Chaplin rejoices in mad non-human fairy-tale fantasia, where Punchinellos and Petrushka Dolls, Speaking Horses and Enchanted Fish, Magicians and Walking Scarecrows introduce an element of unearthly magic. It is not this, it is the objective facetiousness of the man-of-the-world that exercises, wherever it goes, such a blighting influence upon the creative imagination.

What this psychic-sensuous ecstasy that I am defending really implies is a *direct embrace of life*. It is, in fact, a sublimated synthesis of the sex-instinct, the hunger-instinct, the thirst-instinct. It is a see-hear-touch-taste-smell complex, with an overtone of psychic imagination. It corresponds in human beings to the enjoyment-feeling of trees, animals, birds, fishes, and reptiles. It gathers itself together, in a stoical defiance of

discomfort and misery, and forces itself to breathe in, and to breathe out, the flowing bitter-sweet air of universal life. It eats up its mother the Earth in an eternal sacrament. It drinks up its father the Ether in an eternal sacrament. But its vast ichthyosaurus-gills open and shut, shut and open, as it hangs suspended between the spaces, to many more dimensions of life than just this single material one of the astronomical universe. And yet there is nothing "ideal," nothing "spiritual," about its being. It is no more and no less "spiritual" than the in-breathing and the out-breathing of a minnow in a stream !

What the "ichthyosaurus" habit of contemplation really does, when one shamelessly practises it, is to revert to the Static aspect of life in the midst of the vicious flux of a Dynamic age. It dares to have faith in all those essential potentialities of life that our popular pseudoscience denies. It has faith in the existence of the will and in the magical creative power of the will. It has faith in that "something" called *the soul* and in the integral identity of that other "something" called personality. It has faith in a "multiverse" full of gods, full of "good" powers and "evil" powers, wherein not only *miracles happen*, but also wherein the future is indetermined. Chance rather than Fate is its most worshipful Divinity. And, being akin to the aboriginal slime, it is not put out of countenance when confronted by any drifting fragment of prehistoric chaos.

VI

And what is the attitude of this ichthyosaurus-philosophy when brought face to face with death ? An attitude, as I have hinted, simple enough ! By brooding continually upon the image of death, by being incessantly conscious of its own skeleton under its covering of flesh, it never allows itself to separate the idea of death from the idea of life. Being in the habit of consciously drawing upon its long, atavistic recession, it never loses its affinity with the cosmogonic sleep of the primeval rock-structure of the planet—with that meteoric rock-structure that originally issued from the burning heart of its begetter, the sun—with that deep rock-structure that still feels a dim, incestuous reciprocity with the scoriac coldness of its pallid sister, the moon ! How should Death dismay it when its inmost being already contains within itself whatever the secret may be of the actual condition of being what we call “ dead ” ?

It is a sickening and shocking sight to set eyes upon the great majority of the people in our large modern cities who go to and fro along the pavements. What automatic avidity ! What callous indifference ! What benumbed and distracted preoccupation ! The stark, bleak brutality of country-life has in comparison a certain tragic grandeur, a certain earth-bound dignity, born of direct contact with Nature. But the human

race, in these modern commercial times, has got itself caught in a relentless machine that turns living, sensitive people into pallid, galvanised automatons.

But it will not last. A new spring-time will come. The darkest hour is just before the dawn. A new wave of religious and cosmic feeling, different in psychic temper from any that our race has known, is even now rolling in from unfathomable depths and threatening to change the whole outlook.

No, it will not last. It is hard to predict the precise nature of the spiritual cataclysm that is on the verge of bursting out. It may easily be a new emotional psychology, derived from the more magical elements of the Christian religion. It may be a wild inrush of Neo-Byzantinism, drawing its sap and its dark demonic life from the weird antinomian sanctity of the Gospel According to St. John. No one can predict what it may be. But this, at any rate, is certain : it will take the great natural urge toward thrilling ecstasy and give it a mysterious religious twist. It will, in other words, take the obstinate resolution to be happy in the confronting of life, and add to this resolution something else. What it will add to it will be a gesture of the mind that might be named "religious stoicism" ; for although it will aim at a certain kind of happiness, the struggle to get what it aims at will be attended by the same feeling of mystical exultation as is usually brought by the most intense moments of heroic religiousness. The mood I am trying to describe, just because it is a mood of feeling "at bay," implies constant mental fighting, constant mental defiance, in the presence of heavy odds.

It might, indeed, be entitled "The Philosophy of In-Spite"; for it is *in spite* of the blows dealt him by chance and fate that the individual resolves to be happy whatever may befall.

It is surely time to ask the drastic question, What is the cause of this strained, dull look, this look of hurry and scurry, this look at once so apathetic and so strenuous, so devoid of all living happiness, so empty of all peace, which stamps the faces of the people we meet in our great Western cities? It is, in fact, exactly the look that must be stamped upon the countenances of the denizens of an ant-hill, those wretchedest of all wretched custom-driven insects. If, through some enormous moving-picture, we could get a few close-ups of ants, there can be little doubt but that we should feel as if we were looking in a mirror!

And this constant apathy, strained and grey—what is its psychic cause? Simply lack of intelligence, lack of recognising wherein happiness can be found! For it cannot be supposed that these people *want* to be dull and miserable. They do indeed make spasmodic and pathetic attempts to escape this appalling callousness, this dusty futility. They go to the "movies." They go to "parties." They drink; they practise fornication; they read the murder-trials. But all these drugs remain evidently ineffectual—or effective only for minutes so brief as scarcely to count at all. Plants, trees, animals, reptiles, birds, and fishes doubtless, die at last, and die tragically; but while they live—one has only to watch them to see it!—they have long epochs of intermittent life-ecstasy, long epochs of deep, self-satisfied peace.

They suffer from a thousand fears, from a thousand perils. Their life is one protracted struggle for food, just as ours is. But side by side with the tragic dangers and sufferings of their life, they are visited—repeatedly though intermittently—by a magical and thrilling enjoyment of the primordial fact of being alive and not yet dead ! But so many among our dwellers in the great cities *might just as well be dead*, for all they get out of the basic fact of being alive.

The truth is that we human beings have become so dominated by trivial, hollow, sapless crowd-complexes, that in place of making it the purpose of life to feel a certain kind of happiness, we make it the purpose of life to win money, reputation, respect. And in our miserable preoccupation with these unimportant superficialities, we come to allow those miraculous sensations of earth-magic which, in their inherent nature, are adapted to cause living creatures ecstatic pleasure, to pass unnoticed, unconsidered, unregarded. The crucial problem of our day is the struggle that has been thrust upon us by destiny between personal life and scientific machinery. Two great dramatic Protagonists overshadow this struggle—the growing domination of machinery by Money and the growing power of the Russian experiment with human nature. It may well be that within Russia's desperate preoccupation with secular economics as she wrestles with the private ownership of Money there may be latent even now the seed of a real "Transvaluation of values" which her drastic ploughing up of the ground of the Status Quo may enable to grow and expand as it could not do

before. For, in the life of our Western world to-day, putting the case of the impoverished aside, it is astonishing what little pleasure we get from eating and drinking, what little pleasure from going to sleep and waking up, what little pleasure from bathing in hot or cold water, from making a lather with a piece of soap, from putting on our back underclothes fresh from the laundry, from obeying the excremental necessities of nature, from noting the yellow sunlight upon our bedroom-wall, or the frost-marks upon our window-pane, or the flight of sea-gulls over the roofs, or the chirping of sparrows in bare branches, or the smell of the sea or of inland moors carried upon the wind, or the faint sounds of sirens from the harbour, or the fainter sound of angelus-bells from far-off churches—I say it is astonishing, and an evidence of sheer psychic stupidity, what little pleasure we get from these things.

The responsible First Cause or the Ultimate Creative Energy deserves most of the curses hurled at Him from the wounded and persecuted creatures of earth. But He might reasonably retort—not being a materialist or a determinist, not even being an “instrumentalist” like Dr. Dewey—that when He endowed human beings with at least some of the sensibilities of plants, reptiles, animals, birds, and fishes, He took for granted that they would regard the sensuous satisfaction of being alive as a pleasure in itself so subtle and so exciting that it would outweigh most of the accompanying ills “that flesh is heir to.”

Just to behold the sun rise or set, just to catch a fleeting glimpse of the crescent moon, just to feel the

cold, clear, long-travelled air upon your face, just to note certain feathery clouds or certain twisted branches—are these experiences nothing to set over against the wearisome monotony of a meaningless commercial job? If they *are* nothing to set against your worries and your discomforts, why, then you have allowed something in *you*—a sixth sense given you by the First Cause—to grow atrophied and dead!

If you've managed, once in a year, to steal from your family or from your employer a brief week in the country when there were a few leaves coming out and a few plants budding, you will have seen certain sights so ravishing, so miraculously lovely, that, as you gazed on them and said to the passing moment, like Faust, "O stay, thou art fair!" you felt that the whole of your heavily burdened life was worth such an ecstasy. And what has the First Cause given you a crafty intelligence for, quite as cunning—for so it is—as that of a fox or a weasel, if not to use it to plot and plan, in order that you may see more suns rise or set, more moons wax or wane—in order that you may feel more winds blow on your face, more grass grow at your feet, more branches stretch themselves out across your horizon!

Ay, the moment has arrived in the history of our Western world when a new religion is on the verge of breaking forth and spreading like wild-fire among us.

One cannot yet prophesy what world-deep rapture this religion will bring. But this, surely, one can prophesy. It will be a religion that will help individual men and women to shake themselves free from the

factionous, shallow, vulgar, sneering humour of the commonplace world. It will be a religion of intense gravity and intense earnestness. It will be a religion that actually *worships* the sun, the moon, the earth, the sea, the wind, the seasons. It will be a religion that strips off the hot, feverish, gregarious, *over-human* garments of the other religions. It will be a religion that could be shared by the non-human consciousness of trees enjoying the rain, of crows sailing across the sky, of cattle grazing in the fields, of fishes poised motionless in the river, of vipers basking in the sun, of ancient cosmogonic rocks breathing the air and feeling the magic of moonlight. In my own symbolic words it will be a religion of the "ichthyosaurus-ego."

It will be the most sacramental and the most ritualistic religion—but at the same time the most subjective one—that has ever existed ; for every morsel of food and ever drop of drink will be exquisitely godlike to it ! Sleep, with all its mystical intimations, will be the greatest of its sacraments. Indolent, idle, dreamy, care-free thoughts will be the incense of its casual breath. Leisure will be its cathedral-court, and sensuous sensation its high-altar ! Its piety will be drawn from the organic atavisms of planetary life, its ritual from the long centuries of human experience. Its moral virtue will consist in just being "kind" in the most simple of all senses, and in this alone ! The best-remembered, though not the best-loved, of all its many gods will be the ultimate First Cause ; and the great *daimon* Chance will be its Holy Ghost.

But to return to the actual, concrete person of

to-day. It does indeed seem mad, the way we have neglected our power of being happy in remembering. Remembrances are queer things. They come suddenly when we least expect them. They slide into our minds when we are occupied with the most patient drudgery. Monotonous drudgery, indeed, that does not require mental initiative, is much less injurious to the art of day-dreaming than work that requires an alert intelligence. Oh, let us boldly recognise the yearning of our heart's desire and learn the trick of slipping out of all this miserable mock-reality into the real reality of our secret thoughts ! Let us defy all these bustling pseudo-scientists and strenuous educationalists—all in the pay of the money-masters of the machine-world !—and let us make of what they call weakness and what they call anti-social degeneracy and what they call introvertism and what they call solipsism and paranoia and spiritual onanism—I say, let us make of all this the sole and single purpose of our lives ! Let us light a great candle of defiant dreaming, a tall candle of dreaming, burning with white light and orange light and blue light and green light, and let us set it in the open window, now that the wind has dropped. Who knows what travellers, trudging through the deep autumn mud, may see it and shout for joy, and stride towards it, rubbing their hands and smelling the good, damp, evening smell of high-piled barton dung !

As we go through our lives, accumulating these holy, sacred sensations that are the essences of the truth of Being, our soul grows richer and larger and deeper. Work—if it be not that kind of monotonous manual

drudgery that leaves the soul free to remember and to dream—strips the soul of its spiritual flesh, its spiritual bloom and fragrance—leaves it lean, sagging, wilting, flaccid, withered. The soul feeds on dreams like a great immortal ox on sweet grass. It feeds on sensations like a great purple hyacinth on dew and rain and diffused sun-rays. And it can do this in the midst of the most unpromising surroundings !

All people, in the course of their lives, have had some lovely impressions wafted in upon them from the margins and fringes of sense-experience. And these impressions adhere to the soul. They gather and deepen. We forget the pain. We forget the shocks and insults. We remember only the cumulated exhalations of rapture, rising up and hitting our sense, from country-roads, gardens, doorways, old walls, leafy lanes, backwaters, wood-paths, twilit harbours, and the white dust of ancient highways. The annoying, troublesome aspects of experience disappear from memory. Only the rare vision remains.

And we must anticipate this disappearance of the unessential, thus worked by Time. We must command, “Avaunt, ye demons of unreal reality !” and so it will be. The commands of any living soul are full of magical authority. The grand trick is never to have a single day in the country without impressing on one’s memory certain groupings of roads and walls and trees, certain flights of wild birds, certain gusts of wind and rain, certain hot-noon fragrances. You need not worry yourself because things go wrong on this precious day. Everywhere and always things go wrong. It is simply

life for things to go wrong. It would require a different First Cause for them *not* to go wrong.

No, you need not worry because annoying and teasing incidents occur. Sink into your soul and defy them ! They are part of the dark, evil side of the First Cause's personality. Defy them : defy It ! Plunge into Its good side and snatch from these passing emanations from It whatever grist for your mill you decide to select.

All our life long the ichthyosaurus-ego in us devours Life. Thousands of vague, obscure, delicious impressions—some blown on the wind, some rising from the earth, some taking the shape of harbour-mouths full of masts and sails, some of deep, old orchards where the green grass is full of cuckoo-flowers and cattle-droppings, some of hot corn-fields, some of desolate sand-dunes by lonely seas—have been absorbed into its wandering soul. And the curious thing is that around the loveliest fragments of memory there is almost always a strange No Man's Land, made up of slowly-fading hideousnesses and unpleasantnesses—nettle-stings, sharks' teeth, spider-bites, women's tongues, men's brutalities—that at the moment we struggled to forget, that now, in fact, we *have* forgotten. And yet a mysterious effluence from these devilries seems to have survived, and indeed to have actually become a strange neutrality there, no longer exactly evil, no longer exactly repulsive, but, as it might be, a kind of necessary background of rabbit-skins and barbed wire for those lovely memories—playing the part of the minor pains and discomforts which so often in our ordinary experience enhance rather than diminish the intensity of a felicitous hour,

and even take on, by a queer process of transformation, some glow, some glamour, some balm of Gilead from the things that have composed that fleeting harmony.

The philosophy of life I am advocating grows more and more justified when one considers what goes on in every human mind. I mean how we ponder all the time upon things that either give us satisfaction or give us pain, and how, adhering closely to this satisfaction and to this pain, there are great, wavering masses of sensation. But these fluctuating masses of sensation resolve themselves, the moment we begin pondering, into very simple patterns. The modern novelist tends to crowd a great deal too much into his "flowing waves" of consciousness; so also do many modern psycho-analysts.

The truth seems to me to be that this whole image of "flowingness," this image of "the stream of," has been over-emphasised. I beg you to glance quickly now into your own consciousness, reader, as you reach this point, and be honest with yourself. Does what you discover there in any kind of way resemble a flowing stream? Does it not much rather resemble a motionless Eye with a set of emotional retina-colours and retina-patterns held in reserve behind it, and behind *them* again a vibrant thought-goblin projecting waves of creative and destructive energy? And this Eye with these organic lantern-slides of mood-pigments and with this magnetic goblin behind it, is it not always staring—as you introspect your interior process—into a *motionless mirror* full of hard, opaque, palpable shapes, some immobile and some moving, but all of them subject to

rapid change, as the retina-moods play upon them and the interior goblin plays in turn upon *them*?

No, the phenomena of real consciousness in no way resemble this "flowing stream" of which we hear so much. They resemble an unblinking Eye, gazing into a mirror full of shapes that it has the power of transforming—shapes that sometimes jerk into their new positions with jolts, with clicks, with rasping, grating, scraping harshness, and sometimes slide into them with delicious smoothness. But always behind this Eye, curled up and constantly twisting itself about, is a living and very magnetic thought-goblin, whose will-power is continually deciding which of those retina-colours and retina-shadows shall be compelled to transfer themselves to the mirror or be removed from the mirror. Thus the whole transaction begins and ends with the activity and with the lonely and arbitrary decisions of this erratic goblin-creature in the background, this creature whose subjective lantern-slides of pattern and colour are the organism of that staring Eye—this creature whose wilful and arbitrary emotions change the whole contents of that mirror of objective reality.

And what, as a matter of fact, *are* the objects in the mirror? That Eye that looks *into* the mirror is *in* the mirror, and many other kindred Eyes too, each with its own lantern-slides and each with its own wayward goblin! Such is the constitution of the process of thought, as one introspects it in one's own mind, and such is the composition of all the reality we are ever likely to reach. Why, that mirror we look into—that *static* mirror—is

as unfathomable as Life itself. What we have to remember, when we listen to all this pseudo-scientific talk about "motion" and about the "dynamic" being the spring of existence, is simply the obvious fact that without an Unmoved Mover in the background and probably many Unmoved Movers in the middle-distance, there could be no motion at all. The dynamic, in fact, presupposes the static. Both the Many and the One are possessed of motionless, staring, contemplative Eyes, whose vision is the vision of creative-destructive personalities.

The idea of the First Cause is an inevitable one, dependent upon the nature of consciousness itself. In our consciousness we find good and evil. In the universe as we contemplate it we find good and evil. The only inner, intimate, absolute knowledge of *Cause* that we possess is drawn from what we experience in our own nature. We are therefore compelled, as with our dualistic subjective identity we plunge into the dualistic objective ingredients of the "not-self," to take for granted that at the bottom of the world-pond—of the world-mirror—we shall find a First Cause resembling ourselves. We, with our good and evil minds, issue forth from Nature and return to Nature; therefore at the bottom of Nature there must be a Power of the same dual character as ours. The secret of life is the secret of consciousness; and the secret of consciousness is not "a flowing stream," but a creative-destructive Eye contemplating a creative-destructive Eye. There is no reality anywhere but the reality of organism, of life, of personality. What we call the universe is a cosmogonic

congeries of organic Beings each of whose integral happiness depends upon its own individual free-will—depends, in fact, upon the particular adjustment of its own individual thoughts, upon its power of concentration and its power of forgetting—in other words, its power of annihilation.

It is because of the immense variety of experience in the world that it is absolutely essential for each individual human being to have a philosophy that transcends the limitations of merely human tradition. Every man and every woman of us is at once much less and much more than Man. And the living consciousness of a person, at any present moment, grows to completeness by gathering into focus a thousand floating intimations, vague and mysterious, drawn from the past, and a thousand others, vaguer still, which are premonitory of the future. Our philosophy should have a certain *overtone of awareness* falling upon a mass of obscure, disorganised sensations, and giving them a compact and living continuity. Such sensations must revert on the one hand to the slow vegetable growths of the beginning of things, and on the other hand to the embryo rudiments of strange and godlike ecstasies.

One knows only too well how wide a gap usually exists between what is called “philosophical systems” and the actual *sensation of living* that thrills us or hurts us as we go along ! What this “ichthyosaurus-philosophy” of intensified sensation aims at is to create a system of life so direct, so compact, so interwoven with living experience, that it can grow every day—nay, every hour—steadily more intense, more compact, more integrated.

My idea is that philosophy is not philosophy at all until it has assimilated and thoroughly digested both morality (which means being "good and kind" in the simple sense in which dogs, horses, children, and hard-worked manual labourers are "good and kind") and the æsthetic sense (which includes the pleasure of eating, drinking, and making love). An adequate philosophy must be at bottom not psychological or moral, but metaphysical. But when it begins to energise, it must be compounded of imaginative emotion and involved with every physical sensation that we experience. Our vision must be a "complex vision." It must be a living organism, in the sense of being a cumulative wedge of light, made up of every awareness we possess, resolutely turned upon the ocean of the unknown.

Why does it seem a kind of ridiculous pedantry to ask any man or woman in these days what their philosophy is? Because the word "philosophy" is no longer used in its fine old natural cosmic sense. In place of a real living philosophy, full of a rich, sensuous, emotional wisdom, such as that of Epicurus or Epictetus or Montaigne or Shakespeare or Goethe, we are nowadays teased and tantalised by thin, wire-drawn, pseudo-scientific hypotheses, as remote from our real feelings as they are remote from giving us any real reality beyond our crudest experience.

If our philosophy is not constantly thickening itself out by means of our sensual life, it is unworthy of its noble name : it is not the love of *wisdom* at all, it is the love of mathematical word-puzzles ! To philosophise is to isolate oneself from all practical activities, from all

practical difficulties, from all practical ambitions. It is to gather the forces of one's inmost identity together and to fix a steady, ecstatic stare upon such aspects of the "not-self" as we arbitrarily choose to stare at ! To philosophise is not to analyse, with masochistic, photographic humbleness, the miserable fragment of so-called " reality " that happens to be around one at the moment—one's office, one's shop, one's factory-bench, one's prison-cell. To philosophise is to think of one's life floating as a whole—to call up out of one's memory a lovely floating mass of all the delicious sensations one has ever had ; yes, and if need be, to imagine vividly to oneself that one is *where one is not* but where one would like to be !

My own ichthyosaurus-ego, for instance, is not philosophising when it is teasing and fussing its poor saurian brain to understand the arrogant, technical new phrases coined by Professor Whitehead to deal with God and Evolution. It is philosophising when it is contemplating its own life and death, its best-loved sensual sensations, its chosen mate, its dearest friends—and, moreover, when it is doing this against a natural background deliberately called up by its will in a conscious waking-trance and in defiance of its " real " surroundings. To philosophise is to gather up all your happiest sensualities and to associate their united mystery with the dominant mystery of life and death. If you are a crafty ichthyosaurus-philosopher you will know by a deep instinctive earth-scepticism that all this modern fashionable denial of the existence of the soul and of the existence of the will is negligible and irrelevant—a mere

passing mania, that, so far as the real truth is concerned, can be safely disregarded.

Suppose I am at this moment not in my ichthyosaurus-bed, watching the sunlight, listening to the wind, praising and reproaching the First Cause, but in some preposterous foyer of a sumptuous modern hotel, my heart seething with malicious revolt. Am I to hesitate to make the grand initial effort of my secret power of escaping from all this because a set of modern logicians have discovered *in the last ten years* that there is no such thing as the will? *I feel a power* (in the only world that I have a sure and certain knowledge of and a constantly verifiable proof of, namely the world of my own sensations) *of willing*. Why should I let it atrophy within me because Mr. Russell or Mr. Whitehead or Dr. Watson says I am a fool to believe in it?

And what is it that I have the power of doing, as I sit in miserable distaste in this appalling palace? I have the power (even while people are talking to me) of passing through the air, over sea and land, swift as thought, to such a place as the Stone Circle, in Dorset, between Osmington and Owermoigne. And once there, I have the power of kneeling down and tapping my forehead on one of those cold, rainy, flat stones, flecked with the grey lichen of ten thousand years. I have the power of doing this so intently, vividly, actually, and palpably, that the talk I am listening to, and the preposterous place where my "material envelope" is, are reduced to a thin phantasmagoric dream. I am, in fact, quite literally in two places at the same time. And it is the grassy, rainy, windy, lovely solitude of the

one place that makes it possible for the outward expression of my polite attention to the other place to remain so humble, so propitiatory, so harmless. This, in plain words, is the secret religious ritual of my ichthyosaurus-ego, that incorrigible worshipper of loneliness ; and with this ritual no pressure of exacting humanity can ever interfere. The mask that I have had "laid upon me" in these modern days might be called the mask of the Prophetic Clown of the Static in a world-pantomime given over to the Dynamic.

It is my fate to utter a secret that has not been uttered for a very long time, namely that every sort of action is a necessary evil, a teasing, though doubtless an inevitable, interruption of the true purpose of life. What I am now revealing, to the minority of my readers that have ears to hear, is the secret that every human consciousness has got something in it older than humanity *and that will outlive humanity* ; and that this "ichthyosaurus-demigod" ego in us has the power of giving itself up to a particular kind of contemplation of its surrounding "universe" or "multiverse," such as can be made to result in an indescribable happiness. Such happiness is essentially calm ; but it is the extreme reverse of indifference to pleasure and pain. In fact, I have taken upon myself, in this day of the revival of real pessimism, to be the Pangloss of the only possible optimism, the optimism of the great Rousseau !

Once more let me repeat. Every Oriental philosophy that would make us indifferent to happiness is a blasphemy against life. And they are refuted once for all by every plant that drinks the rain, by every animal

that eats the grass, by every infant that is suckled by its mother, by every lover who embraces his mistress, by every girl who picks flowers in a field. "Let us bear the pain as well as we can, for the sake of enjoying the pleasure." This is the cry of life itself—life's one and only cry ; life's cry when it is born, life's cry when it comes to die.

How, in a world like this—a world calling upon us to respond to so much pain, to so much pleasure—can any being imagine, in its mystical folly, that it has made the best of life, when at its death it can only exclaim, "I have learnt to be indifferent to both happiness and suffering" ! Such a last word is the utmost confession of abysmal defeat. And to this defeat, to this blasphemy against life, to this monstrous death-cult, all those Oriental metaphysicists tend who deny the breathing, quivering, vibrating, bleeding difference between happiness and unhappiness, between pleasure and pain.

The doctrine that life *could not exist* without this dualism of pleasure and pain is a doctrine that no man can prove. It is a doctrine hanging in the void. Surely it is not inconceivable that the First Cause, which is responsible for this dualism, might, by using Its free-will, have managed to reduce the pain of the world *to a kind of minimum*—just enough of it to break up the paradisiac monotony !—instead of allowing the balance on the good side to be no greater than it is ? Why could not the First Cause almost overcome, if not *quite* overcome, the evil in Its own nature ? Well, there it is ! It is not much help to ask such a question. The First

Cause remains, just as we and the universe of all souls remain, *with something*—a considerable shade, a moiety, a fringe, a margin—left over, wherein the good does have an advantage over the evil.

The whole secret of life depends upon the kind of sensuality that your inmost nature allows to itself. There is a witless, restless, brutal, unintelligent “pleasure-seeking” that is the extreme opposite of the diffused sensuality I am advocating here. And it is this garish, frivolous, brainless, restless pleasure-seeking that, more than anything else, is the enemy and destroyer of that delicious, dream-creating, contemplative sensuality which is the purpose of all intelligent life. This crude, brutal “having a good time” is as alien from real ecstatic happiness as is one’s absorption in business. It is far more deadly and far more evil than any practical work. *Some* kind of work it behoves us all to undergo, thus paying back what we owe to the human race for food and shelter. But we do not owe it to the human race that we should waste our precious time and spoil the sweet privacy of our secret delights by taking the remotest interest in those absurd “sports,” as they are called, full of such deadly boredom for all lonely natures, and dictated by the silly fashions of the hour to such an extent that even their vulgarity is not fresh or spontaneous.

No one has a right to shirk practical work or to lay it upon others, making use of the hypocritical and tricky excuse, that clever people “are privileged to work with their brains” while the other poor devils have to work with their hands ! This excuse might serve a little better

if the purpose of life were the evocation of some smoothly-running, eugenic, hygienic Utopian State, toward the building of which we all had to offer our most efficient talents. But such is not the purpose of life at all ! The purpose of life is entirely individual and personal, a certain secret adjustment between ourselves, as lonely, organic units of consciousness, and the imponderable multiverse that surrounds us. We each, if we have any sense of honour or any virtue in us, feel we must share the practical labour of housing, feeding, and clothing the naked bodies of men ; but all this is merely the means of life. Life itself, the purpose and entelechy of life, does not even begin until both the tiresomeness of "work" and the tiresomeness of "play" are laid aside and we obtain leisure to enjoy those dreamy, sensual, imaginative feelings out of which our inmost identity or interior "ego" weaves its unique material-spiritual cocoon.

Everyone has a natural right to advocate the kind of economic or political arrangements—however shocking to the majority-opinion—that one feels lends itself best to the housing, clothing, and feeding of human beings. But all these matters are irrelevant to the main issue. Whatever economic or political system we ironically endure or passionately seek to bring about, our real life goes on its way, through good luck and bad luck, through comfort, through poverty, seeking its true happiness in the imaginative sensuality of its contemplative day-dreams.

My reader must suppress his sophisticated annoyance for a moment, at such simple obstinate repetitions, and

allow me to visualise for the hundredth time my poor ichthyosaurus-ego in its actual enjoyment of its hard-won sensual ecstasy. Let us suppose that it has, for the nonce, fulfilled its diurnal task, yesterday or this morning, of labouring for food, fire, and shelter. Having thus satisfied its conscience—and, incidentally, let us hope, spared something of its substance for its less lucky neighbours—it is occupied now in contemplating the horizontal sun from its cottage-window or its attic-window, as that great god strikes with its mellow glow the walls of that secluded room. Let us suppose, too, that certain violet-coloured or livid-blue flames are dancing on the top of the black coals in the grate. And finally let us suppose that sleeping in the bed is its ichthyosaurus-mate, or its ichthyosaurus-child, or both of them ! Now is realised what this poor “ego-monad,” encased in its human skeleton, can enjoy, to the furthest limit, of the secret purpose of all life ! In the feel of that yellow sunshine upon its cave, this entity abandons itself to a rapture old as the world, a rapture antedating by æons of time the sensations of beasts and birds, a rapture reverting to what the aboriginal planetary vegetation felt, to what the primordial rocks felt, to what the ancestral ocean-ooze and the maternal forest-rubble felt, when those godlike yellow rays slid slantingly through the wet mists upon them !

From the mystery of the sun (and for such intellectual sensuality as I am advocating the sun is no mere ball of blazing gases—*it is something else*) our ichthyosaurus-ego turns now to those violet-coloured flames on the top

of the coal. How it warms itself at this fire ! How it gluts its unfathomable atavistic sentiment at the spiritual warmth—the high, sacred, penetrating, ritualistic warmth—*of all fire*, of all fires ever kindled by *Homo sapiens* upon the floor of his revolving globe !

It is possible enough (if it were a spring or an autumn day) that my religious-sensual ego might next cast its contemplative eye upon a glass or a bowl of cut flowers. Having brooded long and long upon the sacred psychic chemistry of fire, our entranced ego, drunk with the happiness that is the gift of life, broods now with an infinite sensual thrill upon that other abysmal mystery—the texture of plant-petals and plant-leaves ! To this cool translucent *flesh that is no flesh*, to this transparent substance that is one of the supreme triumphs of demi-urgic artistry, our poor ego now turns his intense regard, merging himself in it, becoming identical with its shy, evasive, inscrutable passivity.

And then, at last, out of a vague rapture produced by contact with sunlight, with fire, with the mystery of vegetation, our ichthyosaurus-ego turns to the living creature (or the living creatures) upon the bed ! How wonderful, how miraculous, is the beauty of the simplest mortal head when it lies asleep upon a pillow ! Contemplating its mate thus—or its offspring, or its parent, if such be the case—lying there fast asleep, it is as if our ichthyosaurus-ego could weep tears as big as dinosaur-eggs for exultant joy ! Curious tears, of strange tenderness, pity, adoration, could it thus shed over the plain, simple, unconscious form of an ordinary human image, fast asleep on its pillows. All the

cumulated pathos of the lives of men and women in their long history upon the earth—so ill-used by the First Cause, so persecuted by one another—sinks slowly down and balances itself, quivering, like a bubble of holy water, upon the forehead of that sleeping one. And watching it in its quietness, the ichthyosaurus-ego feels that it is not only keeping a vigil over life, but keeping it over death also ; for sleep hath this, above all other things, that it holds the password to the strangely-defended bridge-head that divides the countries of the living and the dead.

Nor is what the ego thus feels in any sense a moral or a pious feeling. It is a profoundly profane feeling. It is quite as hostile to the gods as it is grateful to the gods. What it feels is, in fact, a rapture that might reasonably be named a sentimental, indolent sensuality. Its feeling toward that sunlight is based upon a diffused sensuousness that has something in it resembling the sensation of erotic delight, and something else resembling the pleasure of eating and drinking when what we are eating and drinking are extremely simple things. What it feels toward those violet-coloured flames is a physical sensation heightened by the imagination. What, finally, it feels toward those sleeping forms upon the bed, is a sensuous, superstitious fetish-worship—a worship rooted in earth-life and quivering with chemical reciprocities such as one could conceive a drooping willow-branch to have for the dreaming river-weeds that drift and float in the water below it.

All that my poor ichthyosaurus-ego feels for the air

and water, the earth and fire, around it, must be admitted to be nothing but a simple, dreamy, contemplative sensuality ! Heightened and deepened, because of the power of response in them, it is no very different feeling that it experiences for its human companions when it is left free and unconstrained to feel what it is its essential nature to feel. For them also its real emotion is no more than a particular kind of sensation, purged and rarefied by imaginative sympathy.

It must not for one moment be supposed that in thus enlarging the margin of its consciousness with all the lovely dreamy half-memories that so obscurely come and go across our mind's threshold, the soul is oblivious of the grim conditions of all mortal life. According to my "ichthyosaurus-philosophy" it is better never to entirely forget these ghastly facts. What we were wise to forget is the little, disgusting things, the tedious superficial things, and the particular nervous horrors that torment our peculiar temperament.

But the ghastly certainties of death it is better to remember—yea, and to constantly think upon. We must have *some* iron in our habitual thought ! Yes, it is good to face the fact that we are absolutely alone, and that at any second we can be plunged into ignominious sickness, into extreme suffering, into distracting misery. The warm "loving" gregariousness of the human crowd must be proudly swept aside. We must see our naked soul as born to endure discomfort and un-ease, disturbance and outrage. We must see it as something doomed to suffer a million anxieties, embarrassments, agitations. We must see it as something doomed to

labour, grimly, obstinately, *sans cesse*. And we must see it as something that at any second may be flung upon death. What we each have to face, too, is our abysmal loneliness.

These are the facts of life and death that it is wise never to forget. Round us, at any given moment, may be many pleasant things. But just behind these pleasant things, and mingled with them, are the spikes and iron instruments, the pricks and poisons, the biting frost and bleaching sun, which the First Cause has prepared for us indiscriminately with these happy sensations. We may be pleasantly working in our garden, or enjoying our tea, or reading our book by the fire, while at that very second the gall-stone or the cancer that is to plague us and end us is being laid carefully in its place by the First Cause in the precise centre of our vital forces. Not a day passes but we all have to face some disgusting labour, some disconcerting interview, some premonitory stab of physical distress, some insult, or slight, or hurt to our feelings.

Nor—except for one, or perhaps at the utmost two other human skeletons covered with flesh—does any other being *really care* how much we suffer or what happens to us. To realise our true situation we must think of our soul as if it were a wounded fox scrambling along the edge of a sandy precipice, and too weak and too hurt to escape the slow shifting of the sand that in the end will plunge it over the edge. Death is certain ; and it is by no means certain that it will be a painless death. Many petty disgusts and horrors and vexations inflicted upon us by the First Cause we *must* forget if we

are to enjoy life at all ; but it is wise to feel constantly the stark grimness of our basic situation, nibbling hurriedly, furtively, at the little grass-blades that cover the sharp rocks of our doom, hearing the cold, desolate, inhuman tides washing the heedless pebbles below, and knowing that, with so much pain or so little pain, over that edge we must eventually slide !

The wise " ichthyosaurus-philosophy " must make a deep mental habit of facing these grim realities. You must say to yourself : " I am a plant, a bird, a snake, a worm, a man, a woman. I am here, absolutely alone with my poor true-love, in a loneliness that separates us from every other living thing. Pain is always waiting just behind that rock, that stone, that tuft of grass. Perhaps it will prove a pain so great that it will make us howl, make us delirious. This pain, this misery, is laid upon us by an absolutely merciless First Cause."

We are completely alone in the midst of a universe that cares nothing what we suffer, and less than nothing how we perish. It is the merest accident that we have not been born crippled, imbecile, or hopelessly poverty-stricken. Between the wretchedest wastrel in the city-slum—bleak and pinched and vermin-bitten, leprous with sick misery—and ourselves there is absolutely no difference except the difference of chance—the particular chance by which the First Cause has persecuted him and favoured us. Let us therefore be less cruel and less mean than God !

A kindly-disposed ichthyosaurus has, in fact, an advantage over that great irresistible First Cause, and for this reason : because it has apparently far less evil in its

nature, and has done far less harm. It is true that it has done far less good than this ultimate two-edged Power ; but for ever it will remain a question whether a well-meaning worm is inferior to an evil-wishing god, even though the latter does great good as well as great harm !

The lonely soul holding fast to its mate will be wise never to lose its ambiguous contact with the double-natured First Cause. In its contact with this ultimate Entity it can alone fulfil its entire nature. The solid universe around it may be but a shifting phantasmagoria. Its apparent solidity may be an illusion. But at any rate this visible reality is more real than any of science's hidden " forces." Nothing exists but living organisms. Matter in all its forms—electricity, magnetism, tensions, currents, motions, quantum, forces, events—is nothing but the impression produced on one conscious organism by the bodily and psychic presences of other conscious organisms. Earth, air, fire, water, space, time, dynamic energy, static resistance—all these are mere names for the manner in which certain living organisms, some incredibly vast, some incredibly small, some multiple, some simple, affect one another. Behind the phantom-shapes and malleable dream-visions of the *pseudo-reality* we call the world, exists the living personality of the First Cause, that good-evil, worshipful-hateful Ultimate.

Let us confess the truth. This divine-devilish First Cause is reached by our inmost soul and touched by our inmost soul at innumerable points. We have, each of us, the power of tapping Its magnetic contradictory

energies. When we are obsessed by evil, we tap Its cruel destructive energy ; when we are obsessed by good, we tap its beneficent creative energy. Between It and us there is an umbilical cord : we are Its offspring—Its latest-begotten. We are It.

What we have to do is to realise that we can re-create our minds, our whole intellectual and æsthetic powers, at our free will. To do this we must have faith. It is absurd to leave such a miraculous power as faith to all manner of mountebanks, charlatans, and quacks. We must have faith in the experiments of our own inmost will. Not a biological change, not an evolutionary change has ever occurred that has not been the creation of a particular organic will. And we must will not only the hardening and tightening of our “ ego,” but also its loosening, its relaxing, its liquefaction, *its becoming nothing*. The true “ ichthyosaurian ” method is to appropriate to itself, to the magnetic power of its “ ego,” those profound devices and subtle secrets of self-renunciation known to the saints. We must become nothing in order to become everything ! We must be as weak and ubiquitous and yielding as air and water, in order to be as formidable as space and time.

The “ ichthyosaurus-philosophy ” implies the recognition of the magical power of every living organism. That is why, in these days, it will be attacked and ridiculed from every quarter ! The crude vulgarisations of scientific dogmatism that pass muster as “ modern thought ” conspire together to betray the high sorcery of life. What the individual person must do who has discovered the magical secrets of loneliness is to value

nothing, hold nothing of importance, except the actual experiences of his own soul. In place of regarding his day-dreams as a weakness, he will regard them as the only reality.

I have deliberately named my philosophy by the name "ichthyosaurus" in order to challenge that bastard sense of humour which is always being exploited by the inquisitors of the Status Quo to kill the new shoots of thought. What is this sense of humour of the average human animal? It is a premature explosion of the sadistic desire to hurt and to torment that which is queer and out-of-the-way. Such a desire to hurt, instead of being stored up till it can vent itself in derisive words or in physical violence, bursts out through the organs of laughter. We never laugh at anything that we would not like to hurt. And as it would be impossible to find a philosophy more infuriating to the mental fashions of the hour than this of mine, it is inevitable that the first response to it should be a guffaw, a giggle, a titter. The sort of humour I have in mind is a warm, gregarious, herd-loving, herd-venerating thing, moist with mob-perspiration. It is as cowardly as it is cruel; and it is always as the bailiff guarding the gold of the community, or as the executioner guarding the idols of the community, that it makes its grimaces at a new idea.

Why is it comical to read the word "ichthyosaurus" in association with philosophy? Because every vested interest, every old human usage, every schoolbook-tag of metaphysics, every gloss and commentary upon theology, is entangled with the average human tradition.

People have to overcome a certain feeling that they are not only profane and impious, but also comical and grotesque, when they give vent to strictures upon the Status Quo.

To suggest as even possible that one can take a view of life that extends outside the normal human consciousness—that reverts, in fact, to the remote vegetable-world in the one direction, and anticipates some super-human godlike sense-life in the other direction—seems to these ugly watch-dogs of human prisons and privies the last word of the ludicrous.

There is evolution in other respects. Everybody believes that the trunk of the elephant evolved and that the neck of the giraffe evolved and that the prickles of the sea-urchin evolved and that the uprightness of *Homo sapiens* evolved. Why should not this “ichthyosaurus-philosophy” prove to be something that emanates from the beginning of a new evolutionary phase? Why should not the particular kind of ecstasy, the wretched and crude rudiments of which it has been given me to describe, turn out to be a new evolutionary phenomenon like the elephant’s trunk, the urchin’s prickles, the sea-horse’s scales, the neck of the giraffe, the spots of the leopard?

Happiness, ecstasy, are not entirely material like these; but they undoubtedly have a material basis. Why should not this ichthyosaurus-book be a straw upon the wind, indicating that certain individual human beings are going to develop new powers of psychic-sensual happiness? Man has developed brain-power and love-power and torture-power; why should

he not develop happiness-power? In fact, it were no offence to the noble and true Rousseau-doctrine of "the equality of all souls" if we maintained that in the world around us now are certain human beings, in every class of society—solitary, fantastic, grotesque, human beings, the laughing-stocks of the vulgar herd—who *have* developed a power of secret, overbrimming, exquisite happiness—like the happiness of certain mystics and saints in the past—which is just as different from the trivial pleasures and silly boredoms of the others, as the neck of the giraffe is different from the neck of the mongoose.

The great thing is to make perpetual mental war upon the whole tone, temper, and morale of modern existence in a commercial community. The great thing is to convert as many individuals as possible to the idea of living a static life in place of a dynamic life, a contemplative one in place of an active one. Let all honest men and women earn their own living; but beyond earning their living in an honest way, let them recognise that they owe nothing more to humanity. Each must do his job to keep the thing going. But the wiser you are, the more you will reduce the burden of your job to the narrowest limits; and then—send Society to the devil!

Rousseau copied music. Spinoza polished lenses. Burns ploughed the fields. Humanity will always be ready to pay for entertainers to amuse them. And it is certain that if the State compelled Charlie Chaplin to cobble shoes for a living, he would still earn an extra penny after his supper by his divine genius for making

the weak, drifting derelict triumph over the competent and the well-constituted !

It is quite possible that a time will come when the static, contemplative life will be more easily lived in Russia than anywhere else, and without the necessity of being an exceptional person. But the great thing is to obtain your own secret, solitary liberty in whatever country you live. The thing to do is to think of yourself not as a human being at all, but as a migratory spirit, at present inhabiting a human body. One ought constantly to make a definite introspective effort to detach one's "ego" from its human envelope and contemplate that envelope with humorous detachment. There is much more in this particular gesture than has yet been realised. But one of the most natural ways of using it is to separate your inmost soul from its human associations. Thus you can think of your "ego" as your real self, and regard it as a humorous accident—an example, by the way, of ichthyosaurian humour!—that you were ever lodged in a human covering.

This mental detachment of your "ego" from its accustomed body has, indeed, a further advantage, in that it makes you much more sympathetic with the various non-human entities you encounter. An ichthyosaurus-ego detached from its body has the power of actually feeling like a fly or a snail or a slow-worm. You can almost feel what the fly feels when it walks on the ceiling, with those sticky pads on its feet. You can almost feel how nice it is to trail a long, shining path of slime behind you, as you cross a cabbage-leaf. And as for the slow-worm, nothing could be easier than to feel

the difference between being warm and being cold when half of you is in the sun and half in shadow.

The "ichthyosaurus-philosophy" teaches the equality of all souls as the great Jean-Jacques Rousseau taught it, who is so loathed and hated by the smart writers of to-day. But it is hard to feel this equality as it really is, till you have acquired the art of detaching yourself from your body. It is only then that you find yourself instinctively feeling your natural link with a beetle "rolling a ball of dung," or a yellow gnat drinking pig's-urine, or a little, soft, green maggot inside a splash of cuckoo-spit.

VII

But where this detached ichthyosaurus-ego—this ego that can be detached from the body of the most stupid, illiterate, imbecile person—differs from human moralists is in regard to the difference between good and evil. There is no other evil, so far as this ego is concerned, than malice and cruelty. The look of contempt, the word of scorn, the blow of brutality, and those looks, words, and blows that spring from the abysmal sadism of the Pit—these contain all there is of the opposite of good. Cruelty and malice blend with ice-cold voluptuousness at the mandrake-root of all evil. There they gather their energy, their vital force ; there they become something worse than simply destructive. They become the aboriginal poisoners of dreams, the aboriginal torturers of contemplation.

The ichthyosaurus-ego knows well that there is an evil in the System of Things, extended far beyond the mere human boundaries. All the insane, fanatical, sex-perverted ritual of human vice and virtue, all the fussy pharisaisms and conscience-stricken propitiations of our self-absorbed race, have obscured our vision of the great cosmic drama of good and evil that goes on in the gulfs of Nature.

It is incredible that the lonely un-self-pitying tragic virtue of making yourself happy, even in the mouth of Hell, has been so neglected, so overlaid with gross

deceptive parodies. The only articulate examples of that great solitary ecstasy wherein life perpetually communes with its divine-diabolic First Cause, and in a rapture of planetary lust possesses It, eats It, and drinks It, are first among creatures lower than man, and then among certain Christian saints and certain Chinese mystics, and then among a few poets, and then among a few happy madmen.

The "lust" of the ichthyosaurus-ego can be heroically diffused through space and time and beyond both these illusions. How silly and superficial, compared with this stark, unconquerable, stoical world-lust, is the optimistic "cheerfulness" of the pundits of modern commercial life ! The majestic upheaval of the ichthyosaurus-snout, lifted up to snuff the tragic fragrance of the morning, the tragic breath of twilight, brushes away all this buzzing cheerfulness as if it were a swarm of flies.

There is something horribly evil about almost all insects. With the exception of the butterfly and the dragon-fly, and possibly the bumble-bee, it would almost seem as if all insects were created by the evillest devil's-mood in the poisonous, mephitic imagination of the First Cause. And the clever, active, incessantly-labouring insects, how closely they resemble the lives of the herds of men !

The lonely soul, with or without its mate in its arms, will be wise never to forget that two-faced Janus-like First Cause which in Its loneliness was tempted to all this creation and destruction which we see about us. It will pause continually in whatever it is doing, and fall

into a trance of communion with this First Cause, blessing It, cursing It, eating It, drinking It, ravishing It. The advantage of blessing and cursing, of devouring and spitting out the First Cause, of murmuring to It, of staring at It, of talking to It, in an eternal one-sided dialogue of the Abyss, is that you are not any longer fooled by the accident of the astronomical world's physical enormity. The mere *phantasmagoric size* of the stellar spaces loses its illusive stupendousness. Your own world-creating soul is in touch with the world-creating, world-destroying soul of the Force *behind* this grand mathematical illusion of the infinitely great. This does not mean that the First Cause has "squared" you or reduced you to the pious humility of worshipping It in Its undying duality. You still loathe the First Cause for Its abominable and disgusting cruelty quite as much as you bless It for having given you the supreme gift of life.

But you have not the slightest desire to worship It if you are a good ichthyosaurus-ego. Why should you worship It? It created you in the course of re-creating Its own nature; and you can love and hate It in the course of re-creating *your* own nature! But since It is the bottom of all things, and the cause of all things, what else can you think about? What else can you imagine? What else can you lust for and revolt against? Oh, we must sink down through all the levels of Being, through all the gods and devils, through all the worlds, and cling tooth-and-nail to the First Cause, loving It, loathing It, as the only available Personal Responsibility in a universe made up of personalities.

Let us for a moment face the most searching criticism

that can be brought against this philosophy, this defence of a certain kind of stoical psychic-sensuality as the clue to the deep, dark puzzle of life.

When I say that the lonely soul—when it has “paid its rent,” so to speak, to the human race, for food, shelter, warmth, security—has a right to turn away and enjoy its solitary “world-lust,” it will be objected in many quarters that this is a sleek, smug, selfish, repulsive attitude. But the critics who bring forward this accusation of smugness have surely not gone down to the bottom of the real situation. To the philosophy of what I call the ichthyosaurus-detachment there is only one possible logical alternative, namely the attitude of the saint. Those who talk of “smugness” and “selfishness” have stopped half-way—have not liked to face the real basic situation.

It may easily be that *it is better* to stop half-way, with many issues unresolved, and the human smoke of natural compromise softening every outline of the ultimate spiritual landscape. One cannot deny that such a deliberate preference for *half-measures in the abyss* over the drastic gestures that cannot go further, may be eventually justified as the wiser course. Such a preference for half-measures, for volitional half-measures, may indeed be justified as the truest expression of that cautious suspension of judgment upon all ultimate gestures which any genuine scepticism demands. Perhaps, indeed, it is the strongest, wisest natures, as well as the stupidest natures, who can blunder on, and fumble on, and drift on, without acquiring the habit of any clear-cut mental attitude.

But we are not all strong or spontaneously wise in these things. Many of us are as weak as worms o' the earth in our conduct of life. Perhaps it has always been for the weak that clear-cut philosophical or moral *systems* have been formulated. So be it ! But is that a reason why, in our weakness, we "soft-boiled," unpractical mud-worms should be allowed no philosophy adapted to our necessity ? To drift through life without any "philosophy" at all, may well be a sign of a most lucky and most natural strength of character ! It may save us, too, from just this very charge of "selfishness" and "smugness." So be it ! But in despite of all this, it remains necessary for the weaker characters among us to find some ultimate foothold upon some basic bed-rock attitude, where our habitual moral gesture may somehow justify itself.

Let us descend, as we say, to real circumstantial "brass-tacks." Imagine yourself, reader, enjoying the simple sacramental sensation of a cup of coffee and a roll-and-butter in some small room where at least a fragment of sky is visible and a trickle of morning-sun is at least *reflected* on your wall. (Please attend to my words, just here, very carefully and very honestly !) The mental "lift" given to your sense of well-being by this innocent nourishment begins to arouse your conscious soul to its habitual gesture of exultant, stoical world-lust. Your memory begins to stir in its deep places. Images and sensations begin to flood your being. That strange, living goblin behind your Eye, with its apparatus of colours and patterns, begins to throw a wonderful glamour over the obscure contents of the

great receding mirror of "the not-self." All the "good happiness" in your double nature rushes out to contemplate all the "good happiness" in the double-natured First Cause.

It is at this moment that you suddenly think of the long bread-lines of hungry unemployed men in your city—gaunt, grey-faced, strong men who are denied by you (for you are Society as much as anyone else is) the right of earning an honest living. Simultaneously with this thought of the bread-lines there comes into your head the thought of the cruel ill-luck of your old friend Bartrum, whose wife and children are sick with undernourishment. Even this is not all ! Simultaneously with these thoughts comes the thought of a yet dearer one than poor Bartrum—some woman that you have well loved, shall we say—who at this very second is dying in the hospital of cancer.

Have you genuinely appropriated to your imagination, reader, the situation I am depicting ? It is not a rare situation, as things go in this world. "She is not the first," as Mephistopheles whispered to Faust, while they whirled through the air on their black horses.

Now, be it noted, without any monstrous or abnormal selfishness in your nature, you can still, in spite of the bread-line, in spite of Bartrum, in spite of the dying woman, give yourself up to the moment that offers itself, caused in part by the elation from the coffee, for the particular kind of cosmic ecstasy that you have cultivated as your "purpose of life."

It is now important to touch the bed-rock bottom of this imaginary but very ordinary situation.

You glance at the clock. You drink the last drops of your coffee.

One, two, three minutes pass.

As they pass, very deep, very drastic thoughts follow one another through your brain. A portion of your mind is already giving itself up to the ecstasy I speak of. Another portion is tormented by the image of the bread-line, of Bartrum with his sick children, of your dying friend. . . .

Very deep, very drastic thoughts, gentlemen !

Down upon your "one, two, three minutes" look the books of your philosophic shelf ! The *Logic* of Hegel looks down. Schopenhauer's *World as Will and Idea* looks down. Herbert Spencer's *First Principles* looks down. What a deep gulf between all these abstract discussions of "the nature of things" and the real biting, scratching, aching, tickling, caressing, bruising, blood-sucking, intoxicating *nature of life* with which at this crucial moment you have to deal ! You recall too, perhaps, the calm theosophical words of your friend, the Buddhist priest, who visited you yesterday—words that advocated a sublime equanimity, a metaphysical indifference to both pain and pleasure, an abysmal acceptance of the beyond-good-and-evil of Para-Brahma. How curiously irrelevant to the swaying, reeling wrestling-match, on the floor of your soul, seems this calm advice !

But the little, dark postern-gate of your consciousness opens, and the Christ enters. Never mind the theological implications ! Never mind what your Divine Visitor's opinions may be about the character of His

Father, the Lord of Life ! It is enough that He enters—He, the Redeemer of Men, He, the Lover of Men, He, the Son of Man, He, the Hope against Hope. He does not speak ; no, not a word ! He neither persuades nor commands. He just stands there, absolutely still. Blood is dripping, drop by drop, drop by drop—one, two, three, like the passing minutes !—from His lacerated head, that Head that has dared to follow the human Heart through its uttermost tortures, that Head that *refuses to forget*, that Head that has rejected all happiness except the happiness of love. Here indeed, down there on the floor of the soul, down there on the bed-rock of life, is an authentic *other alternative* to the philosophy of the ichthyosaurus-ego !

And compared with this abysmal Sadness of Love, dripping with Its own blood, moving from one torture-chamber to another, from one bread-line to another, from one Bartrum to another, from one cancerous bed-side to another—does not the most ecstatic psychic-sensual “ happiness ” of the ichthyosaurus-ego appear a little—*cheap* ?

But to “ brass-tacks ” again ! Suppose our worthy coffee-drinker in his humble attic (I purposely have given the fellow the necessity, or the good taste, to be living like a decent, simple gentleman, and not like the vulgar rich) is so stricken to the heart by this Divine Intruder, that willy-nilly he must needs follow Him, what will he do now ? He will, I take it, get up at once out of his chair (two and two makes five when this One among the gods enters a room) and telephone to Bartrum and journey to the hospital via the bread-line.

And then, when he has seen his woman and come out, he will go resolutely on, *following the heart to the limit*, never heeding whether he himself be happy or unhappy (let these "ecstasies" come or go, as they please!), but finding in the sadness of his pity and in his distracting labour for others a "purpose of life" in defiance of the natural law of his inmost being.

Listen ! There is a serious question here. Does this new "way of the saints" that this man is now following belong to that strange region in the nature of the "self" which we have already defined as a fleeting premonition of some godlike state that is in the future to be substituted for ordinary human nature ? Or does, on the contrary, this whole cult of "following the Saviour" exist as a great everlasting alternative to the "beast-god" personal happiness I have been trying to outline ?

It would almost seem as if, down at the bottom, there were only two cosmic gestures possible to man. Nor does it seem as if these were absolutely self-contradictory. Is it, indeed, only a question as to where you choose to lay the primary stress ? Are you, perhaps, compelled by the necessity of things, to follow *both* purposes, so that the question which you have to decide is whether you are going to take the sacred sadness of the saint or the sacred happiness of the ichthyosaurus-ego as your chief purpose, while it will remain in any case as a law of your being that the other alternative will follow your choice as an incidental and auxiliary cult ?

It will be noted that, in both alternatives, *action is subordinate to contemplation*. For even while the saint acts,

pursuing so obstinately the happiness of others, his mind is forever fixed upon that sadness of pity, that mental image of Suffering Love which he has taken as his ideal. The saint does not, any more than does the happiness-seeker, yield himself up to the mechanical "ant-heap" activity which is the sole purpose of the ordinary, gregarious man's life. But, though this be so, it seems still to remain a very doubtful question whether the Christ-like sorrow-worship of the saint is identical with those rare, fleeting, godlike feelings, premonitory of a remote future, which touch with their magical effluence the mud-life of the earth-creature in us.

And what about the man or the woman who instinctively, without a second's hesitation, will offer a life for a life and die for someone who is perhaps a complete stranger? The important thing in either of these ultimate alternatives is to have a philosophy that has become simplified into a single habitual mental gesture. Mere intellectual opinions such as those held by most modern philosophers are of no value at all in the real rush and press and mêlée of life. They are just so many logical patterns of newly-coined phrases. What living organisms must have is *symbols*—that is to say, certain thought-and-feeling *gestures*, that have solidified and simplified themselves into definite motions of the imaginative will. These symbols or mental gestures are of no avail until they have become instinctive and automatic habits.

The lonely ego must face the stream of impressions that pour in upon it with a gathered-up and concentrated motion of its whole being, a motion that slips

instinctively into an accustomed groove of response to the caresses and shocks, the thrilling intimations and cruel blows that the outside world brings to it.

For instance, the lonely ego must accustom itself to thinking of the First Cause as directly responsible for every happiness it enjoys and every misery it suffers. Its indignation against the misery it suffers and the misery it sees on all sides around it will be so great, that to pray to this thing will become quite impossible. If the ego prays to anything, as it may naturally and wisely do, it will be to one or other of the lesser invisible Powers—gods or spirits or guardian angels or even the Christ Himself—who, like itself, are good and well-meaning, and who would, like itself, shrink in horror from being responsible for all the atrocities caused by the First Cause.

But since all living organisms throughout all the innumerable worlds are dependent on this God-Devil, the more strongly any one of them is aware of ultimate realities, the more strongly it will visualise this monstrous Being and alternately bless It and curse It as the event or the mood dictates. We are all vermin in the hide of this terrible Leviathan, but we need not be helpless vermin. We can sometimes tickle It deliciously and sometimes bite It with poisonous blood-sucking bites !

And it is part of the habitual gesture we make to feel an emotion of pity for all the other victims of this sublime Executioner-Parent. We can only do a certain amount for others, unless we are saints ; but our constant attitude of pity and consideration must have its

effect on the nature of things, and must resemble a deep universal murmur of confederate complicity throughout all worlds, a cumulated sigh of all creatures, groaning and travailing in pain together, upbraiding their implacable task-master, but joining in a universal impulse to help one another in snatching what happiness they can from the creative energy of the Ultimate Monster, while they reprobate It and curse It for Its devilish cruelty.

The more closely the lonely ego lives face to face with this abysmal hell in the dark-spotted conscience of the Eternal Being, the more does it learn to shrink in sick horror from soiling its own conscience with any sort of cruelty. There *are* lonely human consciousnesses who are tempted to give themselves up to a pleasure in cruelty ; but if they knew the unspeakable ghastliness of the reality they are thus creating for themselves, they would stop dead, *there* where they stand, with a shiver of paralysed self-loathing. That such cruelty is suicidal from a human stand-point, they know well. They know the ordinary human hell they are preparing for themselves. What they don't seem to know is the far worse cosmic Terror they are bringing down upon them. Insanity, that's what it is ; not merely human insanity, but unutterable, unspeakable, *non-human insanity*. Sometimes in dreams of the night people who have been deliberately cruel get a glimpse of what they have done, and *what companions they have now got*.

The psychology of cruelty is a strange thing. The cruel person says to himself : " I have got beyond human law and human feeling. All is now permitted me, if I can

but harden my heart." Little does he know ! Better had he never been born *than have gone where he has gone* and attached to himself the ghastliness of the abyss that now clings to him. The " Hell " of the mediæval imagination is a poetical joke compared with what he is on the way to experience—crying indeed " upon the mountains to cover him and the floods to overwhelm him ! " Horror is a very peculiar and a very appalling thing ; and those who have peeped through the cosmic chink into the Horror-Dance of the abyss would sooner henceforth hold their hands in a candle-flame and burn them to the bone, than give themselves up to deliberate cruelty. And yet there have been those who in repentance for their past cruelties have learnt a pitifulness almost equal to that of the saint himself. But it is doubtful if even these are allowed the paradise of complete forgetfulness.

Where the primordial " goodness " of the ichthyosaurus-ego differs from the tragic solemnity of the love of Christ is in the simple matter of the *kind* of happiness it knows, compared with the strange, sad happiness taught by this Son of God. The happiness of the ichthyosaurus-ego is an earthly-imaginative happiness, dependent upon certain sensations—sensations gathered up by the memory and carrying with them a floating fringe or margin of mysterious ecstasy that comes and goes, lightly and invisibly, upon the air, upon the silence, upon the wind—sensations, in fact, which are non-moral and entirely *profane*. When the ichthyosaurus-ego goes forth over the earth, with long, exultant strides or coilings of its tail, rubbing its hands

together (if hands they be !) and laughing to itself in a rapture of world-lust, the profane intensity of its life-trance is something very different from the tragic gentle sadness of Jesus.

On the other hand, when it becomes a matter of moral indignation, the indignation that Christ directed against the hypocritical Pharisees the ichthyosaurus-ego directs (being itself no cousin-german of these poor academics) against *that very Father of Christ* who is responsible not only for pedantry (a very mild fault), but also for the whole unspeakable, ghastly cruelty in Nature and human nature !

The contrast could be put yet more definitely. Whereas Christ assumes that the ultimate First Cause is a jealous Lover, ferociously stern to those who reject His love and infinitely merciful to those who cry for His mercy, the ichthyosaurus-ego assumes that what all the poor creatures of earth have to do is to snatch what happiness they can from the " good " in God, while they forget, or revolt against, the horrible " evil " in Him.

It must not be supposed, however, that the ichthyosaurus-ego—this lonely stoical soul of every living organism—is ignorant of the deep and subtle art so profoundly indicated by Christ when He speaks of " dying to live " and " losing life to gain it." The ichthyosaurus-ego knows something, you may be sure, of this sublime secret. Has it not learnt to detach itself from all exterior events and circumstances ? Has it not learnt to find an ecstasy independent of love, friendship, success, reputation, fame, comfort, ease, health, achievement, place,

time, space ? If this is not "dying to live," what is it ? Christ would answer : "Thou art still thinking of thyself, thou sensual Plant-Bird-Fish-Beast ! Thou oughtest to lose thyself in God, or at least in some *other* living soul less mud-besotted than thou art." And the ichthyosaurus-ego would have to answer : "True, O holy Child of the Infinite ! I do think of myself. But if I can persuade every other creature or victim of God to think of itself as I do, and sink into itself and discover the clue to happiness in itself, there will be no brutal mob, whether Jewish or Gentile, ready to crucify Thee when Thou comest unto us again !" Would the Lord smile at this retort, or would He cry aloud in furious tones : "Thou sensual Dog-Hippopotamus ! Thou lustful Hyena ! Away with thee into Outer Darkness !"

There are many points of startling agreement, all the same, between the "ichthyosaurus" philosophy and that of the Redeemer of the World. The ichthyosaurus-ego is basically more friendly to Christ than to any other god. The ideas of Christ are like dew-wet, rain-drenched daffodil-shoots, of a pale, sickly, perilous green. They have the sweet sharpness and deathly beauty of all young sprouting things pushing up *from* the cold earth. But the ideas of Buddha, with that monstrous life-blasphemy of being indifferent to both pain and pleasure, are like over-ripe medlars sinking, sinking, sinking down, full of the maggots of infinite disillusion, *into* the cold earth. The one set of ideas moves upwards, and their suffering is fecund, like that of women in travail ; whereas the other set moves downwards and their indifference is sterile, heavy with the

gravitation-pull of death. Very different from Buddhist resignation is the great Christian-Taoist trick of *becoming nothing*, in order to pass imperceptibly through the prison-walls of pride, vanity, conceit. The lonely soul in the nerves of plants, reptiles, birds, beasts, and men has preserved its identity for æons immemorial by this sublime device.

Every soul, if it can free itself from all the bastard pseudo-philosophies and pseudo-sciences that hinder its faith in itself, has the power of changing its shape, its consistency, its field of operation, its location. It can retreat, if it pleases, into a little, hard crystal at the centre of the creature's being. It can resolve itself into a hovering cloud that can float round the passive body of a person's life, so as to be immune to insults, attacks, degradations, humiliations, hostility, contempt. It can project itself from the midst of any crowd of intrusive objects and hang suspended above them, surveying them with calm contemplation. It can turn itself—this ichthyosaurus-ego—as it rests in its chair, or on its bed, or on the ground, into an entity resembling an ancient moss-grown stone. So it can rest, indrawn into an aboriginal earth-life older than vegetation, while all the waves of circumstance roll over it. So it can rest, while it appropriates to itself that majestic imperturbableness which the oldest rocks possess, that ancient static magnetism which no force can move from its place.

What we must revive, in these mechanical days, is the soul's power of detaching itself from everything, and enjoying its life in spite of everything. Circumstances

we can seldom change. Money-worries, love-worries, ambition-worries, health-worries, unemployment-worries we all have to endure. They are there ; and *we*—we are there ! To suffer physical suffering, to lose our days in meaningless drudgery, to have decisions to make, people to cajole, people to threaten, people to cheat and to be cheated by, fruitless hateful encounters with people who are more alien to us than archangels or water-flies—these things *are simply life*. Only an infinitesimal number of creatures ever, by the divine favour of the gods, escape these things. To suffer something or other, to have to face something or other, this is simply to live. This is what life is. If you cannot deal with this, you cannot deal with life. If you cannot derive some sort of secret personal thrill from dodging all this and in spite of all this, you had better commit suicide. It is far better to be dead than to live miserably.

Most of us are afraid to commit suicide, and yet we are too spiritless, too lacking in resolution and in faith in ourselves, to make, so to speak, the sign of the “ Pentagon ” and call the earth-forces to our aid ! We go about like galvanised puppets. And all the time, from the silent chemistry of the air, from the invisible magnetism of the earth, there could be called to our assistance, if we only had faith enough to make the necessary psychic motion, streams of mysterious planetary force.

There is not any old, bent, twisted tree that has not found a way by some occult instinct to endure its sufferings under heat and cold and storms. As Matthew Arnold most truly says, everything in Nature—rocks

and stones and trees alike—has an air of enduring rather than of rejoicing. They *are* enduring rather than rejoicing ; and so are we. All living things, from infusoria and amœbæ to the most godlike man, suffer pain, in this our life, and have to learn certain psychic tricks of enduring or forgetting pain.

The unknown First Cause is a master-artist in the art of torture. Deep, deep in the heart of God must be implanted the love of causing suffering. This is exactly how Dante envisaged the Emperor of the Universe, when he says that Divine Love and Power deliberately created the Inferno. The old immemorial attitude toward the First Cause assumed through countless ages by rocks, stones, trees, and animals, must be identical with that of Dante. He or It is all-powerful and irresistible ; and He or It has deliberately invented infernal sufferings for sensitive nerves. When Browning showed his gross ill-breeding of soul by mocking (like Trinculo and Stephano) Caliban's attitude to his mother's god Setebos, this robustious poet of an ill-conditioned optimism displayed a perfect example of that sort of disgusting, human-all-too-human facetiousness which has always mocked—and *will* always mock—the non-human raptures and terrors of the planetary creature.

Matthew Arnold is right. The rocks, the stones, the trees of our old earth carry, in their figures, in their faces, rather the look of enduring than that of rejoicing ! They, and the animals with them, share some kind of dark, aboriginal curse, heavy with mysterious fatality, which the First Cause has chosen to lay upon them.

And so with us men. No, it is not any sort of gaiety, of

merriment, of contentment, of optimistic satisfaction, that the lonely soul can expect. The system of things is not arranged for that. The system of things is arranged for the endurance of pain. And yet, in spite of the fact that the pursuit of pleasure is a ghastly failure, there is a certain kind of happiness that can be reached independently of pleasure and even at the very time when we are experiencing pain. *Not*, I fully admit and entirely confess, *the worst sort of pain*. Pain, when carried beyond a certain point, precludes everything and ousts everything—unless the organism is dominated by that psychic power which certain Red Indians and martyrs and mystics have displayed. But for ordinary mortals extreme pain is worse than death. It is an entity in itself. Yes, it is an entity, an infernal devil, who substitutes himself for our mind. We are ourselves no longer. We are just a covering, a husk, a shell, a sheath, in which Pain lives and breathes, with his beating heart and his flickering tongue and his waving horns and his flapping tail !

But the wise ichthyosaurus-ego, so saturated with the experiences of rocks and stones and trees and birds and fishes and beasts, knows well that the only way to take life is to take it from the very bottom. Such a lonely soul knows that it is lucky if it is not enduring extreme pain. It knows that merely not to be enduring pain is a wonderful privilege. Upon this freedom from extreme pain—and this is the true essence of the teaching of Epicurus—all happiness depends. There is so much extreme pain in the world, that all the living entities who are free from it have every reason to be thrillingly

relieved. Such a relief from extreme pain, such an escape, such an interim, such an oasis, is a sufficient background, a sufficient landscape and scenery, against which endless sprouts and up-shoots of irrational feelings of happiness can emerge and establish themselves.

And how absurd it is of the soul to refrain from enjoying itself when neither it nor its loved ones are in extreme pain ! The mere existence of such horrible pain in the world ought to end all boredom everywhere. We organic lives are all so linked together by nervous antennæ of magnetic imaginative reciprocity, that the extreme pain of others is the price we all pay for our own happiness. Each one who suffers in the great gamble of chance is a sort of Christ vicariously bearing the pain of the world and saving others from such torture. This is indisputable. For since it is chance alone that shakes the dice, and since someone must suffer, everyone who *does* so suffer suffers in the place of those who escape, and therefore, like Christ, like Prometheus, like all martyrs and heroes, suffers for us all. This vast vicarious redemption from suffering, by which the lucky ones among us gain our happiness, is extended far beyond the human race. It extends to trees. It extends to worms. It extends to dogs and horses. It extends to sheep and cattle. There are horse-Christ, and fish-Christ ; there are worm-Christ and snake-Christ : there are dog-Christ and camel-Christ. Every tortured creature in the universe creates directly and quite simply the happiness of those who escape torture. This argument is irrefutable. Extreme

pain is a Black Necromancer who goes up and down the earth, taking every protean shape. He can be in many places at the same time—but *not everywhere*. Therefore every organism who receives him and harbours him so that he lives within their quivering husk, *saves from his visit some other organism*.

One can imagine certain tremendous white-magicians, of the calibre of Christ or of Prometheus, who, as soon as they realise the horror of the abyss and the existence in the world of this devilish Pain-Baphomet, are prepared to strip themselves naked and beckon it to their bosom. Some of these Saviours of the World may indeed be endowed with such supernatural powers of personality that they can, like a tortured Red Indian, mock their own sufferings. Others may have the courage and the devotion to plunge into it, but not the supernatural power to retain their sanity under it.

But how necessary it is to realise once for all the invisible electric, nervous currents that bind together all living tissues, all psychic entities, as if by thin, vibrant air-waves ! Thus we start our life from the ground of the possibility of extreme pain. We are all of us born out of the extreme pain of our mothers. Women, indeed, much more than men—being so caught by Nature and entangled in Nature—understand this great mystery. That is why women—and *all* feminine creatures—give themselves up so easily to a strange irrational, hysterical, nervous happiness. The laughter of women, the smiling of women, *is not an expression of humour*. It is an expression of the physical

and psychic relief that comes from the mere experience of being free from extreme pain.

But allowing all this, how silly it is to permit minor worries, lesser pains and discomforts, to spoil our happiness ! We have to force ourselves to forget the extreme pain of other entities in the world. The power of forgetting is the grand healing, drugging, numbing anæsthetic that makes happiness possible for anyone. Of course, it might be argued that the reason why the Christs of this world are so sad is that they *cannot* forget. Ever and always they feel upon their lips the bitter taste of the hyssop-sponge. Ever and always they hear upon the air innumerable voices crying aloud, " My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me ? "

But what a thing it would be if the spontaneous childish happiness of living organisms, that " pleasure which there is in life itself," *were not to be allowed* to any plants, to any flowers, to any trees, to any birds, or beasts, or reptiles, or men, or gods ! How dark a hell it would be if all the suffering that *any* solitary soul knew were to be snatched at and appropriated by every other solitary soul ! Then would we all indeed go to and fro with the bleeding hands and the bleeding feet of the Christ ! *Then* the only laughter heard in the universe would be the laughter of devils. For, though we read that Jesus wept, we never once read that Jesus laughed. It *may* be (I do not deny it) that there have been heroic sufferers, as brave and tender as He, who have, by the grace of the gods, been able to laugh as happily as women and children, even on the eve of their crucifixion. The philosophers, however, who would persuade

us that Socrates was one of these, are talking nonsense. To drink the hemlock was nothing, compared with what endless human beings, far, far weaker than Socrates, have had to undergo. It is these things that the ichthyosaurus-ego understands ; for in its primordial experiences it has lived closer to the sufferings of our mother, the earth, than other more humanised souls.

Certainly the fact that Jesus lacked all humour, except a certain sad, world-deep irony, is an argument very helpful to my contention—on behalf of the solemn ichthyosaurus-ego, brooding upon its secret mystic-sensuous raptures—that the facetious humour of the herd-animal man is an enemy to the deep cosmic happiness I am advocating. Just as the spiritual solemnity of Jesus has always seemed “ foolishness ” to the clever pagan comedians of the world, so the sensuous solemnity of the ichthyosaurus-ego seems ridiculous to the human-all-too-human worldlings of our day.

Again and again is it necessary to return to the main argument of this book, namely that in a plurality of irrational worlds like this, made up of nothing else than the clashing-together, the swirling, seething, struggling together—with intervening moments of delicious heavenly contemplation and non-human peace—of endless conscious, semi-conscious, demi-semi-conscious *entities*, including the planetary bodies, our own earth, the sun, the moon, the stars, the utmost nebulae—there is, and there can be, only one purpose of life. This purpose is to derive what happiness we can from the contemplation

of what we choose to select out of what surrounds us. In other words, the purpose of life is to contemplate Life. And Life is something very different from what they call the good, the true, the beautiful. Life is naturally and solely a heterogeneous congeries of many minute particulars. The "happiness," too, is not *any* kind of happiness, but a very special and very particular kind—not for one second to be confused with any feverish, vulgar, brutal, superficial pursuit of mere pleasure.

The great psychic secret I am trying to reveal just here is the fact that our free will has the power of going on making the motion of enjoying the universe (or the multiverse) that surrounds us, when really we are suffering from some mental or physical discomfort that banishes every easy access of spontaneous happiness. The motion of the will to which I refer resembles the turning of the wheels of some obstinate wheat-threshing engine when the crate that feeds it has stopped. What I contend is this, that the mere keeping-up of the grain-devouring motion, *even when there is no grain to devour*, is itself a cause of a certain deep auto-created happiness. The happiness machine, in other words, can go on grinding while it is left quite empty. And the mere defiance of circumstance, the mere defiance of the First Cause of all unhappiness, the mere stoical, obstinate, automatic grinding of the mental machine, satisfies something in us so profound, that its satisfaction creates a kind of happiness—creates it, like the original creator of all things, literally *out of nothing*.

In an irrational world like this, where the life-purposes of all entities are so confused and contradictory, how can there be any adequate "purpose of life" in a universal, in a widely human, in a cosmic sense? *There can be none* except the one I have named. Every Utopia will find some recalcitrants, some indignant rebels and misfits. Every "far-off divine event" will find some "queer son of chaos" to dispute its desirability. An adequate "purpose of life" must of necessity be individual. It cannot be merely racial. It cannot be merely human. The individual entity—be it man, beast, plant, or god—is superior to the universe.

The universe—that exhausting abstraction—is only an arbitrary and imaginary congeries, or mass-accumulation, of individual personalities. Any individual personality—that of a bedbug even—is superior to the universe. The universe is indeed less than nothing. The individual is more than everything. Oh, how much greater than any abstract whole is any particular part we know or can imagine! No one can sound or fathom the magical power, beautiful and terrible, of the individual personality. Each individual soul sinks down so deep, sinks down through so many universes, that it can tap for its own purposes all sorts of strange, non-human, cosmic reservoirs of magnetic power. All these pseudo-philosophical, semi-scientific "concepts"—including the newfangled, new-coined ones invented so freely by clever modern abstracters of logical quintessences—are only hypothetical abstractions, pruned away and scraped away from the only

reality we know from the inside as well as the outside, namely the mysterious and organic life of an individual personality ! Let me repeat. What we call the universe is simply a vast congeries of living Bodies and Souls, each one of whom is in contact with dimensions of existence transcending both Time and Space.

Why should human tradition—religious or philosophic or scientific—lie with so heavy a weight of rationalised Portland Cement upon the lonely-journeying soul ? Come, let us shake it all off ! Let us revert to certain old immemorial simplicities. Let us fumble and grope backwards and forwards till we touch the fortunate oasis of a liberated, integrated detachment, toward which there are (let none deny it !) wonderful, unexpected trails, made through the sands, by men of old-time. And not only by *men* of old-time ! There are more *Revelations*, as they are called, than the organised religious and traditional sciences dream of. This earth is not the only dwelling-place of conscious minds. Ah, they surround us, they surround us on every side, the teeming offspring of the deep womb of Being ! When the solitary ego confronts its prison-house in real stripped nakedness, it knows well enough that it is only one of an immeasurable multitude, all of them conscious intelligences, all of them changing their prison-houses into so many Fata Morganas of subjective enchantment !

What we do not think about enough is the tremendous problem of what really is the purpose of life. To the Christian, as well as to many others, the purpose of life is to love God and to give up your will to His will.

Now, what does this mean ? It means that we assume that the First Cause is good as well as powerful. It means that we assume that the First Cause loves each one of us with a terrific, formidable, infinitely tender, infinitely merciful *personal love*. This apparently was what Jesus believed ; although in a strange mystical fury He was prepared to condemn to the wrath of God such as rejected God's Son.

Jesus would have been more Christ-like had He threatened no living soul, however annoying, however hypocritical, with those cosmic abysses of horror which, in the incoherent mud-born prophesyings of the ichthyosaurus-ego, are reserved for the soul who has dared to imitate the ways of the First Cause by saturating itself with cold-blooded cruelty. As a matter of fact, like Prometheus, like His Mother the Virgin, the Christ of sacramental tradition gathers to Himself all the goodness of the First Cause and lifts His magical voice against all the evil. This is the grand secret of the religion of Dostoievsky, namely the worship of Christ *in place of God*. Those who eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ do not eat the flesh and drink the blood of the First Cause. If they did, it would turn to hellish poison in their stomachs. They do not become one with the First Cause ; for if they did, they would be compelled to share that unutterable hell of remorse which the everlasting curses of all living creatures must be for ever creating for their Creator. To love Christ, however, and do the will of Christ, how does *that* "purpose of life" strike the sub-human and super-human detachment of which I am revealing the

secret ? It strikes it (let us confess at once) with profound awe and wondering respect.

When a genuine saint—one of those rare souls who actually do love Christ and who actually do follow Him—approaches the ichthyosaurus-ego, the poor fish-bird-beast-sorcerer will squinny at the celestial apparition through narrow ophidian eyelids and humbly worship. “ I have it not in me,” those heavy lids would say, “ to be what thou and thy Master are, but I behold and see clearly that, after thy fashion, thou art stronger and nobler than I.”

Thus would the ichthyosaurus-ego greet the saint ; and not a word more would it utter. Slowly, as the saint went off, it would close its primeval eyelids. Slowly would it once more take to itself that old planetary “ goodness,” older than the heroism of the saint—the “ goodness ” of rocks and trees and fish and birds, the dimly-adumbrated “ goodness ” of a titanic race of gods that may eventually be as strong as the saint, though as yet they are dumb, incoherent, inarticulate, half-helpless—far weaker, or at least far less effective, than the saint in his inspiration.

But it is only to the real saint that the ichthyosaurus-ego would confess himself thus humbly. To the rank-and-file brotherhood, to the half and half Christians, who shove and crowd and jostle and barge by him, hesitating not to poke him with their pothouse gibes, not a wink will he give, not a groan will he utter, not a prophecy will he make ! He will pay them for his bread-and-treacle with his diurnal labour ; but, when he has paid them what he owes them, *then*—by the

winds on Salisbury Plain !—he will live his own life in his own way.

What the ichthyosaurus-ego knows well enough is that even in the life of the saint there are many moments when the happiness that he feels is not the strange happiness of the love of Christ at all, but the same primordial happiness in merely being alive that the great clumsy Saurian itself makes such an ado about !

Do the midges, dancing in their one single noonday or twilight-day of sun-rays, know anything of the life of Christ? Does the moon know anything of Christ's blood, as she steers her silver disc beneath the yellow cloud-bank and swims forth again, cold, luminous, free, in the dark-blue ether?

For those who have suffered more than they have enjoyed, it would be better never to have been born. So close to the dreamy half-consciousness of the bodies of the planets, of sea-ooze, of wood-rubble, of shore spindrift, is the consciousness of the solitary soul, that it is impossible for it, knowing as it does the deliciousness of being only half-alive, to feel this horror of death that makes so many warm, feverish, too-human mouths cry aloud, " Better to be in Hell than not to be conscious of life ! "

Let no one think that, when I use the expression " First Cause " for the hypothetical final synthesis and totality of things, I am limiting myself to any old-fashioned syllogistic cause-and-effect creative force. What I call the First Cause is what is meant by the concept of " God " in every one of its numerous forms. My " First Cause " is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and

Jacob. He is the "God" of Jesus, the "God" of Marcus Aurelius, the "God" of Aristototele, Saint Thomas, Dante, Hegel, Spinoza. He is also the "God" of Professor Alexander and Professor Whitehead. He is also the Pantheistic "God" of Goethe. Eliminate, if you please, the whole concept of cause and effect, my "First Cause" will still remain. He will only resolve Himself into the sum-total of existences and forces and energies and events. He will continue to be just the same "God" or entity or idea—namely *the ultimate Responsibility for all that we call Life.*

VIII

Let us sink a plummet-line straight down into the quintessence of this "ichthyosaurus" book. Where is it original? Where is it new? Where is it what ordinary minds are in the crude habit of calling "important" or "significant"?

It is "original" in this—it is "important" in this—that it takes as its main purpose of life what in all lives, as they rationalise for themselves some practical or ideal Objective, comes to them sideways, indirectly, and, as it were, *on the road*. It is original in so far as it isolates those lucky moments of ecstatic happiness—calm, simple, flowing, absorbing, carrying with them the feeling of *something eternal*—which come to all beings, human, sub-human, super-human, as they live out their lives and hunt for their egoistic and altruistic satisfactions—and, having isolated such moments, in so far as it gathers them up, in one grand, continuous overtone of consciousness that becomes the main experience of the life of the soul.

In a certain peculiar sense it is quite true to say that this book is a defence of sensuality. For who can deny that it is from the senses—from the senses as they report their impressions to the conscious or half-conscious "soul"—that all lovely and magical feelings of happiness proceed?

The lonely soul—or the ichthyosaurus-ego, as I wilfully

insist on naming it—gives itself up, most rightfully and legitimately, to *every sensual feeling*, erotic or otherwise, that is neither cruel nor malicious. That ghastly and yet strangely beautiful wedge, which the mysterious urge to self-destruction and to self-immolation—for the sake of the Love of God or for the sake of the Fear of God—has thrust between the body and the soul—that fearful but profoundly alluring Manichæism of the Spirit which from the beginning of time has troubled with its accursed duality our essential nature—this book sets out to dissolve in the acid of primordial, saurian spittle ! It has done great things for us—this terrible wedge. It has saved us again and again from the fear of death and from the misery of fleshly ills. But it has also poisoned for us the candid innocence of that great overtone of happiness which rolls like a calm moonlit tidal wave over the sense-life of all consciousness.

When the ichthyosaurus-ego, from under its drowsy ophidian eyelids, peers profoundly forth into the secret of things, it seems to detect that “ God,” or “ the First Cause,” or “ the Ultimate Responsibility,” has played a dastardly trick upon Its simple and gullible creations. To excuse Itself for some abysmal blunder—or, what is worse, for some devilish lapses into malignant cruelty—this Supreme Responsibility has managed to lodge in poor human minds (it has been less easy to fool the fishes and the birds—although the wretched psychic slavery of most insects has beautifully lent itself to the divine diabolic trick !) that sensual delight, even when completely free from malice and cruelty, is in itself an evil. All the way down human history—and doubtless,

too, in the history of the patient ant-tribes—the crafty, guilty creator has instilled the wicked notion, throbbing with auto-sadistic insanity, that lively, laborious work is a “good” in itself, and that passive, dreamy sensuality is an “evil” in itself.

The calm, noble sensuality of the vegetable-world is alone entirely free from the primal curse. *They* “toil not ; neither do they spin.”

Think of the diabolical cleverness of this arch-responsible-one in poisoning with conscientious scruples the very fountain of joy itself ! Was it, perhaps, a stroke of super-planetary cunning in this guilty God-Devil when He put into the head of Christ the idea that He, the Redeemer, represented the First Cause’s inmost Being ? He represented the First Cause’s inmost goodwill ; but He did *not* represent the First Cause’s *inmost evil-will* !

But the ichthyosaurus-ego in its lonely planetary detachment—like some huge prehistoric toad that has refused to become a fossil in spite of the æons of time that have passed over it—turns still upon this equivocal Responsibility his cold, unblinking eye. What he feels is exactly what every organic consciousness, or semi-consciousness, must feel—from the eagles in the high ether to the lice in a beggar’s beard—namely that we are all subject to shock after shock, and blow after blow, as well as to enchanting caresses, from some supreme, unknown Power.

Yes, Caliban is right ; and the good braggadocio Browning is making a trumpet of his tail ! In the soul of the poor ichthyosaurus-ego the vast primeval mud

finds a prophetic voice ; and its utterance is much more disconcerting to the Most High than the forked hissing tongues of all the serpents in Hell. Thus it is made clear enough what the " morale " of the lonely soul must necessarily prove. A stoical " morale " it must be, but without the comfort of that wisdom the Stoics talk of, lodged so deep in Nature, and " strongly and wisely determining all things." For the lonely soul, whether of animal or of man, has to gather itself together to live obstinately in those among its various impressions which are sweetest and loveliest to its deepest heart. It has to steel itself to endure some sort of pain, some sort of misery, some sort of maladjustment, some sort of dread, some sort of humiliation, every day of its life. That it should receive such blows is simply another name for its being alive. Thou art born unto trouble, O unknown progeny of some Female, even as the sparks fly upward ! But in the psychic moral " credo " of the ichthyosaurus-ego it is easier to endure pain, anxiety, and calamity in a defiant mood, than in a resigned and submissive mood. It makes everything much clearer, healthier, more open, more honest, when you can say to the arbitrary Tormentor, " You'll have to hit me harder than *that*, before you make me cry for mercy ! "

Of course (need I repeat it again ?) the soul knows well enough that the Universe, without lifting a finger, *could* send it howling to the madhouse, to the hospital, to the stake. That is exactly what it is doing, at this very moment, to many living souls. What the ichthyosaurus-soul refuses to do is to try to curry favour with this arbitrary Force. To its poor simple mud-conscience there

is a certain unpleasant Pecksniffianism about praying to be made a favourable exception of, while the other "inmates" of the cosmic workhouse are getting "what's coming to them."

Now listen, gentle reader ! If you are a dweller in a big city, do please glance very searchingly to-day into the faces of the passers-by you encounter on the pavements. Except for children and the younger women you meet, and a possible Chinaman, no one will look even moderately happy. Critics of this book, deriding my mud-oracles with facetious humour, will at once say, "Where on earth *in all this* is anything to *make* anybody happy ?" My reply is that such happiness is not far off. It is very near to everyone. It is within the thickness of a hair of everyone ! It only requires the slightest twist of the life-rudder to make it leap up and carry us forward. For where does it dwell, this happiness ? Chance indeed sows the good seed ; but where does it root itself, and where is it brought to harvest ? In our own imaginative will ! Yes, in our obstinate, profane, and irreducible will to *be* happy, to enjoy this lovely, magical ecstasy before we are dead and cold.

But there is another abysmal trick by which the too-human, traditional, pseudo-religious, pseudo-scientific conscience fools our simplicity—the trick, namely, of persuading us that it is our duty to "follow Truth." And when we come to enquire what this precious Truth may be, "Reality," they cry, "the real, objective, actual, practical, 'brass-tack' world, in which sensible people have to live !"

Oh, the look of dreamy, puzzled amusement with

which the ichthyosaurus-ego receives this piece of arid information ! Of course he knows he has to earn his "keep," his straw, his winter fuel, his thimbleful of wine. In earning these he pays his tribute to this precious "real world," this Mumbo-Jumbo devourer of childlike happiness ! But when his debt is paid and he has earned his living—to the devil with this real world ! Like Jean-Jacques Rousseau he will "botanise" and live rapturously in his mystic-sensuous feelings. Extremes meet, and the ichthyosaurus-ego, while acquainted with an older and far deeper "reality" than any even dreamed of by these strenuous moralists, loves to give himself up, as all wise saurians do, to long periods of passive dreaming. Oh, the golden hours when a person is "happy," just simply remembering his old divine moments, just simply chewing the cud of his old, sweet memories ! Which, of all the creatures of earth, seems to be in the deepest and subtlest rhythmic harmony with Nature ? Is it not the cow, the sacred, milk-producing, ruminating cow ?

"But," it will be protested by the heroes of Herculean toil, "will there not be restless, spiritual yearnings—will there not be desperate, unutterable strivings—will there not be reckless love of high, sad Truth, of wild Beauty, of mysterious self-sacrifice—will there not be Quixotic struggles toward the great Mystery—such as, in this gross, low, sensual, lazy, 'introvert-life' must be degraded and dethroned ?" Not at all ! These wild, pure impulses are natural impulses. They come to all men. All men, after their fashion, are compelled to indulge them. The ichthyosaurus-ego in his

primordial mud is by no means devoid of these feelings. He also is driven sideways, up, down, here, there—constantly, *every day*—into the current of these strange-tossing, supernal tides ! “ But,” you say, “ he refuses to make of them the sole object of his existence ? ” Yes !

And why does he so refuse ? He refuses because, in the thrilling happiness with which Nature floods his being, to make them so would be to betray the calm-breathing peace of Life itself. Since he is contemplating continually the ultimate totality of all this weird agglomeration of cosmic entities that we call the universe, he is never dull to these desperate overtones. These super-human yearnings are the birth-throes or the remote future in him. They find their response as he gazes into the mirror or the First Cause’s dualistic nature ; but so also do his sub-human yearnings towards the remote past.

It must be remembered that when I speak of the “ day-dreams ” or the “ brown-studies ” of the ichthyo-saurus-ego, I am not thinking of such sinister mindless trances as were those of the idiot Smerdyakof in *The Brothers Karamazov*. I am thinking of those high, strange, exultant trances (though these were often caused by the approach of his malady) of the Idiot himself in *The Idiot*—or of such a mood of ecstasy as that in which Alyosha Karamazov kissed the earth with sobs. Whenever the word “ day-dreams ” occurs in this book, the reader must remember that behind such contemplations exists a long-cultivated adjustment of mental forces, an activity of concentrated effort, a

psychic-sensual apogee of that mysterious *energeia akinesis*, or "energy without agitation," which Aristotle attributes to the Eternal Being Itself. Nor do I for a moment imply, in my praise of "day-dreaming," any disparagement of those excellent amateur occupations with which active natures (among such as love manual labour and have escaped from their job) absorb their vital energies. Digging in the earth, for instance—what better way of keeping the soul calm and quiet while its mental wheels and pulleys and cogs adjust themselves to the vision that is desired? Manual labourers themselves are frequently seen to possess not only vegetable-gardens but also flower-gardens. The ichthyosaurus-ego within us can often think its happiest thoughts when digging up clods.

Wherein does the philosophy I am advocating differ from the forced, strained, shallow optimism of so many contemporary cults? It differs from them in its honest recognition that from the minutest lives of invisible pond-creatures and microscopic bacteria, to the gigantic lives of elephants and rhinoceroses and whales and eagles, there is an ultimate duality of cosmic good and cosmic evil that descends into unimaginable depths. It differs from them in its irrefutable recognition—taking the lovely and horrible spectacle of life *as it actually presents itself* to the consciousness of all living things—that the First Cause of this irrational, chance-driven chaos must be as arbitrary, as wilful, as erratic, as well-meaning, as evil-meaning as all its evocations are. My ichthyosaurus-philosophy is the only philosophy I have ever heard of *that takes life as it is*, as it apparently

presents itself to rocks, plants, reptiles, insects, men, and super-men. All other philosophies leave one in the lurch at the very moments when one needs philosophy most.

The most extreme opposite of my ichthyosaurus-philosophy—and the one that in my opinion humbugs us with the maximum of rationalised treachery—is the spiritualised “ pantheistic ” one, which would have us believe that the universe is at bottom benevolent ! The old-fashioned religious conception—hideous and immoral though it is, with its monstrous fantasia of “ Heaven ” and “ Hell ”—has more of truth in it, just because it is at once more irrationally rapturous and irrationally horrible than any of these dull, sleek, easy, hollow, humbugging “ pantheisms ” of the kind, good, lovable universe. Any Negro revivalist, with his erratic Jehovah-Jesus-Setebos, comes far nearer the secret of life than a universalistic logician with his benevolent absolute, just because such a Negro medicine-man is a *fundamental dualist*, and, in his ecstatic worship, is forced to go through a deliberate willing-to-forget. *To forget what ?* To forget the *evil* face of his two-faced Janus-God !

The ichthyosaurus-ego—this deep, atavistic, and yet premonitory consciousness in us all—has much in common with the mythological overtones in all the old great poets, from Homer to Goethe. It has much in common with the sacramental doctrines of the traditional Christian Church. Dostoievsky, William Blake, Unamuno, the Druidic Triads of the Welsh, the *logoi* of Laotze, the noble wisdom of those early Greek

poet-philosophers before the accursed "syllogism" drew its snail-blight across human thought—all these have their subtle affiliations with what I am struggling to disentangle.

I have sometimes wondered if there were any actual "religious" building in the world that would lend itself, at least in imagination, to the synthesis of sub-human and super-human that I have in mind. And it has recently occurred to me that there is such a spot—such a real Temple of the Winds. From the zenith to the nadir of our terraqueous globe, I think there is only one such place, a place whose mystic, immemorial masonry answers with full reciprocal weight the burden of this reiterated doctrine. Need I tell my readers that this is Stonehenge? From those vast monoliths and trilithons, at the coming-on of the two twilights, there emanates, when the wind mutters from the right quarter, a faint music that is the veritable orchestration of this fusion of the sub-human with the super-human. Perhaps here—and here alone on the whole surface of the earth—could the lonely spirit I am concerned with, could this ichthyosaurus-ego praise and curse, in mysterious, rhythmic consentaneousness, the double-natured First Cause of its being! Here, and here alone, could it gather its whole nature together, a spiral waterspout of ecstatic contrariety, and *will to forget* the evil in its Creator, while it weeps in gratitude for its life.

But every place can be the Stonehenge of the ichthyosaurus-ego. In every place—even on the pavements of the evillest and most efficient of modern cities—it can

erect its Temple of the Winds ! This rain-gendered book of mine, which reveals to certain simple natures the art of a happiness by which they may transcend the herd-instincts of our human crowds, refuses to have any dealings with the cold cruelty that hitherto has betrayed every attempt to invalidate the commonplace. Thus it differs by an enormous gulf from every form of ancient heathen worship. But it differs also from the blind worshippers of the unknown Mystery in that it retains *the terrible innocence of its eye*. It is so old, this ichthyosaurus-doctrine, that it has learnt the archaic child-trick of consciously forgetting what it knows well enough is there, namely the horrid Cuttlefish Beak of the creative energy that evokes the world. For ever washing away its own temptation to destructive malice in the sacred rain-water of the primeval elements, it seeks to approximate nearer and nearer to the goodwill of its double-faced God, while it defies to the bitter death His evil-will. Alone among religious creeds it has fathomed thoroughly *and to the very bottom* the perilous duality of the Power that made it.

Ay, and this secret, ecstatic life-worship of Life in which it indulges—this overtone of happiness in a blighted and poisoned world—might be called its Sacramental Dance of Being and Not-Being. Sacramental ! That is why this book can justly be named “ a defence of the senses.” From every morsel we place in our mouths, from every drop of milk or of wine, or of coffee or of tea, from every splash of sunlight on the limbs of its mate, from every furrow of ploughed earth whereon it plants its feet, from every wisp of spindrift that blows

across its path along the sea-sand, from every grass-blade that rustles against it, from every wind-gust that cools its forehead, there rises, fluctuating, undulating, quivering, a magnetic current from the abysses, that helps it to dance its dance.

This Sacramental Dance of the ichthyosaurus-ego in all living things is not only a sex-dance : it is an eating-dance, a drinking-dance : it is a sleeping-dance, a walking-dance. It is the great solemn Dance of Life, that mocks the silly, sneering facetiousness of human humour. Clumsy it is, and awkward, and very grave. But it has its own grotesque earth-humour too, a humour that antedates the grimaces of the oldest clown in the world.

Well does it know that what is called human gaiety is the saddest form of drunkenness. How can any living things be "gay" when either of the two eternal twilights—that of morning or that of evening—is sinking down over land and sea ? How can they be facetious when the sweet monotone of the grey rain, or the wild wailing of the wind in the pines, or the hoarse breaking of the waves on the beach, brings thoughts into our minds, and feelings into our hearts, that are as beyond tears as they are beyond laughter ?

And just as the furtive happiness of the ichthyosaurus-ego turns a saurian snout of planetary contempt toward the mocking human humour that in evil maliciousness hates it above everything else and would fain destroy it, so it turns, not its snout, *but its tail*, in saurian contempt, toward all the machinery of modern commercialised existence.

It does not wage war upon such machinery, for the simple reason that it has learned to reduce it into invisibility, into nonexistence ! It uses it when it needs it, but it uses it *as though it used it not*.

The materials of its earth-life—the fetishes, the sacraments, of its diurnal piety—are food and drink and sleep and wind and rain and dew and grass and sand and rocks and stones and the miracle of vegetation. These are simple things. But these, and the yet simpler sensations of world-old amorous desire, are enough to satisfy it. Out of these it can build up its world of intellectual day-dreaming ; out of these—and *out of memory*. Sideways, unexpected, arbitrary, by day and by night, come to our souls, touching them with vast, overshadowing heron-wings, the vague sense-memories of earlier years. We are working patiently at our job, neither happy nor unhappy, just humbly dulled with the anodyne of monotonous labour, and suddenly we recall a stretch of road, a particular hedge, “ a single field that we have looked upon,” a particular rain-swept cliff, a particular grey millstone, a particular river-bridge, and in a second a strange, soft, melting sense of some incredible secret in the world sweeps over us ; and Life, with all its harrowings and proddings, and with all its scrapings and rakings, seems justified, if it can evoke such feelings.

One great advantage of the ichthyosaurus-philosophy is that it can be used by the individual under any type of political or economic system. It could be used by a king. It could be used by a slave. It could be used by a Communist. It could be used by a Fascist. It could lend

itself beautifully to a Red Indian : not less beautifully to a Chinaman. It could be the philosophy of a gipsy, of a prostitute, of a thief, of a soldier, of a sailor, of a miner, of any factory-labourer on earth. It is peculiarly adapted to the African race. Indeed, many of its deepest secrets are stolen from the life-wisdom of that noble and ancient people. It is intimately affiliated, too, with the Bedouins of "Arabia Deserta," as can be well realised by the least acquaintance with Doughty's great work.

But its best inspiration comes from no human source and leads to no human end. Man is a happy man, from my point of view, only when he uses the power within him of sinking into something "below" humanity and anticipating something "above" humanity. Oh, we grow sick at the stomach in the presence of all this mincing, miming, prunes-and-prism "Humanism," with its covert propaganda in favour of the rich and respectable, and its vitriolic, academic, community-smelling *loathing* (like the hate-song of a good, industrious ant-heap) of such a profound, solitary *imaginative will* as that of the great Jean-Jacques Rousseau !

Nietzsche was a noble, lonely genius, too. But one would like to ask him rather bitterly why it was necessary, in his detestation of human vulgarity and human idealism, to go and praise the murderous Borgias and the cruel "Blond Beasts."

I have an inkling that the bully-boys of the Status Quo, whose professional sniggerings and ethical clap-trap all refined, lonely spirits desire to escape, are much better refuted by the dumb patience of a plant or a

stone, than by the opera-bouffe antics of a Stage-Bluebeard !

I am perfectly prepared for any captious logician to press me to inform him how I come to know so well what plants and stones are feeling. I answer that *I know from what I feel myself*. Can anyone deny that there is an organic link, potent, magnetic, psychic-chemical, binding together all existence, "animate" as well as what they falsely call "inanimate" ? It is by means of this organic link that I can speak for the psychic-sensuous feelings of plants and reptiles and birds and fishes and beasts, and for all that long series of sub-human lives which emerges from earth and water to breathe the invisible air. It is by means of this organic stream of innumerable lives, now stretching out their irresistible antennæ in premonitory awareness of a dimension of Being *beyond man*, that I can speak for the sensual feelings in our nature that touch the super-human.

But where, in regard to those forward-looking Millennium-Hopes of which so much has been made—where, in regard to those "far-off Divine Events" the expectancy of which affects certain souls so deeply—do the frontier-intimations of the ichthyosaurus-ego hover and expand ? What, in fact, are its marginal inspirations, its in-sucked waftures of hope from air-corridors and air-vistas, when contrasted with the apocalyptic visions of other intensely-felt philosophies ? The Buddhist looks forward to Nirvana : the Mohammedan to Paradise : the Catholic to Heaven : the Pantheist to the great unrippled ocean of One Being : the Protestant to the Last Day and the Return of Christ. To what does

the ichthyosaurus-ego look forward, for itself and for all other "selves," on its impassioned "All Souls" Day?

It looks forward to nothing! Here indeed is the whole crux of its inner life. It lives by an act of faith in the power of its own *imaginative will*. But this faith is utterly disillusioned with regard to the whole importance of external changes in the Cosmos. The "changes" it looks forward to are not in the Cosmos at all. They are in itself. They lie within its own power. In its own power is the magic of creation and the magic of destruction. In its own power is an infinite avenue of increasing and subtilising ecstasies, as that cosmic mirror before its gaze deepens and deepens.

What does it want with ultimate "Reconciliations" and "Restitutions" and "Millenniums"? Itself is its own Millennium. Its Eternity is its own Past, its own Present, its own Future, even as it arbitrarily chooses to decide how, in all three, it shall be. It is not enslaved either to Time or to Space. Time and Space are just inadequate and misleading names for the margins of its sensations, as is also this newfangled "Space-Time." What these words represent is simply a certain interior *continuity* in certain interior feelings. As for all this traditional human sentiment surrounding such swelling words as "Eternity," "Infinity"—why, the old, sly, much-enduring ichthyosaurus-soul has seen, in its long cosmic lifetime, through its half-shut, dragon-scaled eyelids, a thousand "infinities" and "eternities" exhaled and inhaled in the smoke of its own slow-taken breath!

The other intensely-felt philosophies—for I discount

as totally alien to *real experience* the merely logical and rational Systems—seem all to demand both some universal, final summing-up of things and some present escape from the living-annoyance of this *wicked duality in things* which we regard as simply the First Cause's expression of *Its* own Good-Evil nature.

But the ichthyosaurus-ego has spied out the fox-holes and bison-trails of far too many "incarnations" and "avatars" to be fooled by these pathetic sentimentalities. It knows that its own secretest being contains the good and the evil of the nature of its First Cause. It knows that it is less evil than the First Cause in so far as it tries to be "good" and "kind," and to cease from being cruel; while the First Cause, as we can all see from the most cursory glance at Nature, makes no such attempt. The ichthyosaurus-ego does not envy the First Cause that ghastly Golgotha of well-merited remorse which must be *Its* eternal portion as It considers all the atrocities It has deliberately set going. Nor is our lonely soul ashamed to confess that one reason for its struggle to suppress its natural cruelty is sheer panic. And well may it feel such panic! The Hell that comes to the soul that deliberately gives itself up to cruelty—even to cruel thoughts—is not a pretty thing to think upon.

Yes, so far as I can see, there are only two basic alternatives, in adjusting ourselves to this essentially cruel world. The one is *to be a Saint*. That is to say, to devote your life, by giving up the satisfaction of personal desires, to the alleviation of all sentient suffering—bearing, in fact, that burden which the First Cause refuses to bear! The other is to try to forget the suffering as

completely as you can, and to devote your life to a defiant enjoyment of as much happiness, *of a certain very especial and particular kind*, as you can snatch or can create.

The lonely soul must face the full basic implication of being alive. To be alive means to be as "good" as you can, and as little cruel as you can, in a System organised upon a mad substratum of monstrous duality. Let none deny to the poor mud-born ichthyosaurus-ego the high privilege of debouching now and again into the "rarefied air" of that noble life of the Saint which, out of the sensual body of its own heathen day-dreams, it presumes to admire !

From the mud we spring. And the "soul" of the "body" of that mud must be immortal, if there be any immortality anywhere. The "soul" of the "body" of that mud is as important as anything else. Good is it and evil is it, even as the soul of its creator. Well does the ichthyosaurus-ego within us know, from its old experience of the wisdom of plants and reptiles and beasts and fish, that if a maggot, a newt, a lob-worm, a shark, a tiger is not capable of immortality, *we* are not capable of immortality. The ichthyosaurus-ego within us knows, from a deep, sub-conscious experience, that the whole teeming mass of living creatures, visible, invisible, *stands and falls together*, so far as immortality is concerned.

The reason why so many human beings give themselves up to-day to the modern malady of "futility," is that the false, artificial, *human idealism* that has fed them with lies has been found out, and they are left with nothing else. Let them fall back on the lovely delights

of a simple sacramental sensuousness. These delights never pall or fail ; and, if we are not unemployed or mad or in the hands of the police, they never *can* fail. What, in fact, produces the "futility-malady" among us is a refusal to concentrate upon the simple psychic-sensuous delights that everybody can enjoy, and the refusal to make of these little things a ladder to the ultimate.

I repeat again, there are only two alternatives. One is the philosophy of the ichthyosaurus, and the other is the philosophy of the saint. If you choose the latter, if you make *sanctity* your purpose of life, it means that you must give up all thought of the satisfaction of your personal desires. It means that you must live with the sole and single object of relieving the sufferings of other beings, and of increasing the happiness of other beings. By making this daily and hourly renunciation—this absolute sacrifice of one's natural egoism—the riddle of human life is solved, and the old, tight, wicked "knot of contrariety" is untied. But, all the same, it remains true that, do what he can to escape from sensuality, the actual moments when the saint is thrillingly happy are the moments when some little sideways vibration of psychic-sensuous enjoyment catches him unaware.

It is a thing that must be whispered rather than shouted, but the truth seems to be that the more full-brimmed grows the tidal wave of the ichthyosaurus-happiness, the more does the habit increase upon it of behaving to others in a manner not so very different from the manner of the saint. It is, indeed, only from an indwelling fountain of happiness that any absolute

spontaneity of charity can proceed. The happier the lonely soul grows to be, the more freely does it fling away itself and its possessions for the benefit of all who pass by. When the well-to-do person ceases to experience a craving to feed the hungry and to create some sort of pleasure in the nerves of the miserable, one may draw, as an absolutely certain conclusion, that his own inner life is sterile, abortive, pulverised. It is, as everyone knows, a psychic peculiarity of certain perfect spring days, that plants, birds, reptiles, animals, and even insects, seem to pour forth upon the air a surplusage of vibrant well-being, as though every tiniest organism there, every infinitesimalest cell *inside every organism*, were consciously lavishing its own psychic magnetism as a free gift to all the rest.

Oh, there is here, in this ichthyosaurus-philosophy, much more of an escape from the biting worries of life than anyone who has not experimented in it could possibly guess ! In the mere satisfaction of knowing that you have not allowed the errors and manias of humanity to imprison your soul, there is inexpressible comfort. Not a man, not a woman alive but has felt at some time or other that all these "principles" and "convictions" and "imperatives" were simply human errors, such as needed only a strong, clear breath of planetary wind—and lo, they are blown away !

The old immemorial "goodness" that Rousseau and Goethe believed in, natural to all entities, animate or inanimate—the ancient "goodness" that prevents even the most predatory of creatures from practising cruelty for cruelty's sake—is enough to save us from the

adder's-tooth of remorse. We need feel no remorse when we give up every "conviction" we possess, every "principle" we possess, every vestige of every "creed." So long as you refrain from cruelty and *from all cruel thoughts*, you are completely and absolutely fulfilling the deepest purpose of life by being simply happy. The only real sin is not to be happy ; and except for your own extreme pain, or the extreme pain of anyone you love, it is in your own power whether to be happy or not. The Universe owes you no happiness. Life owes you no happiness. As for Humanity, it is continually occupied, in its various mental and moral insanities, in assassinating your happiness. Let the whole affair be between your naked soul and its double-faced responsible Creator ! Never allow yourself to cease for many hours, either in daylight or in darkness, from your secret double-edged conversation with the ultimate Cause of all life.

It is unfair to the First Cause to be ungrateful to It for the power It has given you to be happy in spite of all. It seems sometimes that there really *is* a small balance of happiness over unhappiness when you take the whole enormous tide of living entities into consideration. Life is nothing if not shamelessly unfair ! Some entities have far more happiness than others. Some entities seem, by temperament, by circumstance, by the cruelty of Humanity, hit and hit and hit beyond all decency. In certain cases there seems to be an insane malignancy in the stacking of the cards of Chance. There are luckless persons, luckless animals, luckless reptiles and birds and fishes, that seem to be especially selected by Chance to

be persecuted, tormented, and evilly put to death. Some living things seem to fall into the power of a positively obscene ferocity in the heart of the First Cause. It is just *there* that what Shakespeare calls "the rub" lies. I mean that, though it does seem unfair to the First Cause not to be grateful to It for one's own power of being happy, there yet remains a certain gross and caddish ill-breeding in being overboisterous in one's gratitude at any given moment, when one knows perfectly well that *at that very moment* so many of these victims are crying out in vain for pity. No, it would almost seem that a certain cumulated psychic force might be brought to bear upon the First Cause, if a growing number of entities—even in two or three stellar systems—even in four or five spiritual dimensions—perpetually communed with the unspeakable Thing, praising It for Its goodness and cursing It for Its cruelty !

One of the silliest and meanest of human attitudes to life—an attitude taken only by beings of an extraordinary opacity of perception—is the attitude which assumes that there is "One Great Law" running through everything, an implacable moral Law, full of Rationality and Righteousness, and that it is the wilful deviations from this Law, among the various living creatures, that cause the unhappiness in the world. There is no such Law ! Down in the heart of every minutest nucleus of electric and psychic life, there is irrationality, arbitrariness, free choice, and an element of the undetermined. The mechanistic philosophers and logic-mongering pseudo-scientists who talk of "fate"

and "determinism" must be singularly devoid of any kind of honest introspection.

What do all living things feel and see when they turn their minds inward? They feel and see two facts: first, that not Fate but Chance is the dominant power in the world; second, that the secret of all movement, of all change, is a mingling of the creative energy of the First Cause with their own creative energy. Both of these two energies are unfathomably arbitrary, wilful, and irrational. When these dull-witted rationalists tell us, as they are always doing to-day, that no magical, no mythological view of the universe is any longer possible, let them be answered by a very brief retort. There is no view of the universe, there has never been any view of the universe, brought into real contact with the ways of Nature, that is not saturated through and through with magic and mythology! So far from magic being absent from the processes of life, there is nothing in these processes that is *not* magic.

Modern megalopolitan minds are so conceited, so full of the half-understood catchwords of an experimental science that refutes its own conclusions every year, that there has grown up a kind of *snobbishness of reason*, according to which all spontaneous, natural, simple, childlike glances at the world—such glances as keep their innocence of eye—are disparaged in favour of thin, wordy, technical abstractions. It is not surprising that the "Prolet-cult" champions of the Communist State should associate the great philosophical systems with the particular economic conditions out of which each of them sprang.

What the ichthyosaurus-ego never permits itself to forget is the enormous gulf of non-conducting material that separates those vast ideal systems, with their portentous morale, from the actual living-experiences of men and women in a modern city, especially the experiences of the extremely poor in a modern city. And what of the life of a tramp? A pretty mockery would the high, recondite speculations of Bergson seem to the brain of an exhausted hobo, bumping in the straw of a draughty freight-car between Chicago and New York. But the sayings of Jesus would sound to the ears of such a one sensible enough. So would the utterances of Epictetus. So would the thoughts of Laotze. Does this mean that the philosophies of Bergson and of Croce and of Professor Whitehead are too profoundly true to be understood by a simple, unlettered mind? Not for a moment! It means that between the concrete, actual stream of living-impressions that this poor bum receives, and the recondite march of Bergson's or of Whitehead's argument, there is a vast brazen lacuna full of hollow academic echoes; whereas between what he feels and what Heraclitus or Laotze would tell him, there is a much smaller vacuum, and *their* words would fall with much fewer mocking reverberations.

It is natural enough and proper enough that *scientific treatises* should be remote from life. But until Socrates shuffled upon the scene with his tedious, wire-spun conceptual argumentations, to be followed by Plato's ideal elaborations and by Aristotle's syllogistic complications, philosophy was, *as it ought always to be*, a magical, oracular, gnomic revelation! The only

philosophers who approach the real honeyed poisons and dragon-slimes and fishy scales, and all the bloom and fragrance and divine-diabolism of the life we have experience of, are the prophets and the poets.

Philosophy is nothing if it is not a clue, a talisman, a magic word that a person can conjure with. The philosopher is the seer, the sorcerer, the medicine-man, the sage who can offer to bums and derelicts and imbeciles, as well as to patient, respectable workers, the sort of "Eureka!" that enables poor human organisms to pull themselves together and really "endure happily or escape."

So many of us are compelled to live in hideously modern towns and cities; and the very prick and quick of our harassed lives depends upon the way we take our destiny. The great secret is to assume an attitude of ironical detachment from the whole spectacle of modern life. Not to take such life "for granted"—that is the trick. The mind can easily work this miracle. The mind within us is not merely the mind of a foolishly-sophisticated city-dweller, fussing about amid shops, offices, studios, theatres, concert-halls. It is the mind of a starfish, a bird, a polar-bear, a viper, a sea-anemone, a sycamore-tree, a half-born planetary god! The best way to live in such places is to concentrate on all the sacramental symbols of "real reality" that we can disentangle from this machinery and from these prodding iron spikes. These houses, these pavements, these noisy streets can be treated as if they were so much primeval mud and sand and scoriac rock, across which we draw our ichthyosaurus-scales,

enjoying the aboriginal "feel of matter"—the feel of warm sunshine, of the cool wind, of the tossing rain.

When we first wake up, the best thing to do is to gather together those particular impressions of cumulated memories of our sense-life that have thrilled us most, and with the whole dreamy weight of our nature to taste them once again in a sort of stoical desperation. That is where memory is so wonderful a goddess ; for *nothing* can take our memories from us. With the power of memory at our disposal, we can enjoy life to the bitter end. We must have the wit to copy the cattle. We must chew the cud of delicious memory and defy Providence to take it from us.

Round and about, over and beneath these precious sense-memories, hover the undertones and overtones whose heavenly essences are the purpose of our existence. It is to accumulate these that we live—not to acquire fame or wealth or honour. Any monotonous labour is a valuable aid to this secret ecstasy, to this furtive, hidden worship of the life-stream. But the advantage is lost if such work exacts too close an attention ! It is sheer madness to waste our brief life in vulgar gregarious excitement, when a rapture so much more intense is awaiting every solitary moment of mental liberty. The insect-like human beings who hurry to join every buzzing swarm they can find, resemble sticky, silly flies going up and down a hot, shut window, while all the while, a yard or so away, is a wide-open door.

The ichthyosaurus-philosophy—or, if you please, the philosophy of the Missing Link—does not need any

unusual "orgies" in order to get its deep, profane thrill. It needs nothing but the taste of bread, of butter, of honey, of milk, of tea, of coffee, of wine. It needs nothing but the look of a lighted fire or a lighted candle. It needs nothing but the touch of its mate, of its offspring, of a patch of earth-mould, of a gust of wet, westerly wind, of a streak of sunlight between the wretchedest curtains.

What the solitary ego feels, as it goes to and fro in this universe crowded with alien lives, is that every single one of them is worthy of the most intense and ritualistic reverence. We have a planetary right to be detached and cold-hearted. But we have a similar obligation to show elementary consideration and courtesy. Figuratively speaking, we ought to take off our shoes in the presence of every living organism we encounter. The saint's power of "loving" every organism he meets may indeed excite our astonishment; but it is well within our "animal-vegetable" scope to bend with scrupulous fetish-worship before the presence of a dead tree, a cut worm, a withered plant, a mangy cat, a faded doll, a broken idol, a murderer, any poor scrofulous devil, any God-forsaken whore!

Oh, the moment has come when we must break the prison-bars of our narrow human state and enter the life-religion of those great time-æons and space-immensities that include all the cosmic children of Chance and the First Cause!

Higher and higher, every new day of our secret life, mounts up the intoxicating wave of sense-memories. Lilac-bushes in back-yards, smoke-blackened trees by

murky pools, village-commons with broken railings where the small grey rain seems to fall for ever from the north-west, wet ditches full of yellow flowers by the wayside, faded stucco-houses with rusty ironwork on their roofs and red geraniums in their window-boxes, clearings in swampy moss-grown withy-beds, newly-ploughed fields foraged by querulous crows, gleaming sands with thin black windrows of sea-scum over which the foam-bubbles drift rainbow-tinted from the breaking surf, noon-drowsy road-banks where little blue butterflies hover above the hot dusty dandelions, lonely tollpike houses on wind-swept hills where groups of stunted Scotch firs creak and murmur like exhausted sentries in armour—such are a few of the impressions that rise up upon us and flow through us when we sink into that *inner world of real reality*, which daily, monthly, yearly grows richer and richer—that sub-human, super-human world which the deep essence of Life itself gives to its children. Such things as I have named are drawn from country memories ; but even city life has its own intermittent magic for such as have eyes and ears.

And this life-purpose of the ichthyosaurus-ego, this gathering-up of inviolable essences, is it not the same for all human consciousnesses that one can conceive to exist ? A “ blind, age-bowed beggar ” crouched before the flapping awnings of some Sahara bazaar, a miner washing his hands at the kitchen-sink, a tramp cooling his blistered feet in fresh-grown spring-grass by a Kansas highway, a wastrel, with a silver-piece tight in his cold fingers, hurrying to a wayside gin-shop, a

priest drinking-in the cool night-air as he issues from some fetid death-house, an exhausted bureaucrat huddling on his overcoat to face the biting wind (and yet with a wry chuckle) as he shogs off to a rendezvous with his girl—these are merely a few casual examples of time's precious jetsom. But even in random cases like these, how completely "work" and "machinery" and "politics" and "the future of humanity" vanish away like smoke from before these more intimate, more penetrating impressions ! What actually happens in all these cases is that a perfectly simple physical sensation, or a simple anticipation of physical sensation, enables some particular "ant" in the great moiling "ant-heap" to sink down far and away, out of the illusion-world of tedious social activity, into the authentic world of individual vision.

What the ichthyosaurus-ego has learnt by bitter experience is that before he can go on obstinately accumulating his private store of *life-cud*, so that he can chew it at his leisure, it is necessary to make certain stark, stoical gestures of renunciation. He has to renounce, for instance, that superficial pleasure of society, else he will never bring the chaos of things into control. Society is the worst enemy of every sort of intense and passionate life. Society is the most insidious fungus growth, into which all the most corrupt poisons of the human peril distil their plague-pus. Here indeed we touch the crux of the whole matter. This book is written to reveal the fact that it is possible, by invading the social humanity in us from both ends at once, to squeeze it out almost completely ! The

sub-human invades this human element from below, thrilling us with the lovely receptivity of the vegetable-world, while the super-human invades it from above, thrilling us with strange intimations of a god-like state as yet unrealised.

Is it not a mysterious thing how some deep taboo in our inmost nature makes us dodge the issue and feel as if we dare not follow our natural instincts? What these natural instincts encourage us to do is to turn the whole orientation of personal life inside out, and make of what hitherto has been regarded as unimportant and unessential the only important and the only essential thing. In fact, we must make of what hitherto has been casually taken for granted as mere accidental feelings coming to us *en route* the whole essence of the grand matter of our days. We must take the fluctuating, undulating margin of our simplest sensuous impressions—that margin which has so many mysterious avenues and vistas, and which hitherto has floated round us unconsidered, disregarded, neglected—and out of it, as we hoard and store up its visions like miser's farthings, we must consciously weave the inmost cocoon of our spiritual identity.

Oh, we must break loose from our human prison and thrust the tendrils and antennæ of our being into both the non-human worlds. When we have done so, when we have squeezed our human sensibility into a very small space—squeezed it between our sub-human nature and our super-human nature—why, then it will be seen what free, happy, profane spaciousness there is for our soul! There is, indeed, an incredible feeling of

liberation when one realises one's lonely identity in the midst of rocks and stones and trees and the great silent motions of the constellations ; not to speak of planetary spirits and all the invisible organisms that fill the gulfs of space ! How can anyone, thinking of the difference between emotions of this sort and the gregarious mob-emotions of any Megalopolis, not realise that the moment has come for the birth of what Spengler would call a New Culture ?

The animal and vegetable identities in places where human crowds never come—yes, and probably the birds of the air too—live a life much closer to pain and death than any of our present-day moral teachers do, unless (which is very rarely the case) they belong to the proletariat. I think the fact that all modern philosophers live, so to speak, *at two removes* from the stings and pricks, the blastings and blightings of earth-life, accounts for something that dodges the issue in their work, something that goes booming on and on, with a flat, hollow, empty sound, while the blood and the spittle, the sobbings and the curses, the mosquito-bites, and the tiger-crouchings, the hot sweats and the cold fevers, thicken our destiny altogether independent of it.

We need philosophers who have had to work for their living at some manual labour, or have been soldiers or sailors or tinkers or tailors. Even gipsies would be able to bring into the tone of their thought something of that intimate acquaintance with hardship, with pain, with death, that the sub-human creatures know. Oh, it is a mistake to say that the teeming sub-human world knows not the meaning of death ! It does not show the sort of

evidence of its knowledge that our human reason can fathom ; but it knows with a direct knowledge that is absolute. It is because *we* know in ways that are half-rationalised—in plausible, relative ways, touched with vague after-thoughts of “immortality”—that it seems to us that they know nothing of it.

Where the great traditional human philosophies miss the mark is just exactly where the nature of the lonely soul, pricked, stung, bitten, blasted, blighted, stabbed, and staggered by the cruelty of existence, sinks into the sub-human portion of its being, in order to resist some particular shock, and, in the second place, where, out of the very desperateness of its need, another portion of the individual's being flings itself forward into an unborn future, creating the mysterious godhead which is its entelechy or premeditated issue.

How can anything be the “purpose” of any living thing but that particular plunge into experience—that particular reciprocity between the lonely ego and the mirage of sense-impressions that the ego half creates and half discovers—which the mere fact of being alive entails ? The time has come when it is necessary that one voice, at least, should be raised on behalf of a way of taking the world that has hitherto escaped the emphasis of philosophers simply because of its extreme and childish naturalness.

How weary have we grown of all these subtle, idealistic systems, based upon the notion of a great unified Cosmos, arranged in hierarchical circles, and mounting up like a mathematical pyramid to the unknown feet of the mysterious, cabalistical Zero-God !

How weary have we grown of all these electrical and magnetical hypotheses, that rob "matter" of its face-value for our senses and our imagination, and, in so doing, rob it of the only reality that is of the least interest ! The view of the world which I advocate here is, in fact, the simple, immemorial view of things to which all consciousnesses, semi-consciousnesses, and demi-semi-consciousnesses would necessarily confess, if they looked straight at reality and could use the language of men.

The only "truth" we know anything of *from the inside* is the "truth" of our own identity. What, then, is the natural, obvious cosmology that follows from this ? Why, simply a world *entirely composed* of bodies and souls that resemble our own ! And at the back of this pluralistic world—not by any means immanent or co-extensive, but independent, detached, creative, destructive, *responsible*, outside this whole heterogeneous chaos—a hypothetical First Cause that, by the necessity of the case, we are compelled to treat in an anthropomorphic way !

Thus we arrive at the childish, but quite unanswerable conclusion, that the old personal view of God is far more natural than either a vague, immanent Over-Soul or still vaguer electrical "Energies." But while we were forced, by the fatality of our innocent eye, to meditate upon such an anthropomorphic God, we are by no means forced to worship Him ! The worship of Christ is a different matter altogether. We may, indeed, idolise in clumsy bewilderment, such sad, heroic sweetness as that of Christ ; but toward God our

feelings can—nay, ought to—be extremely dualistic. Indeed, what those optimistic poets and prophets do who thank the First Cause for *their* happiness in a world where other souls are miserable, is to slap all the unhappy ones cruelly in the face. We cannot be strong and lusty in our gratitude to God for our own good luck without hurting and insulting most cruelly God's innumerable victims. It is mere chance that we have found, by luck of circumstance or by luck of temperament, some clue-word, some original gesture, some cabalistical sign, that helps us along and keeps us going. To praise God too boisterously and blusteringly for this, is to praise Him like an ill-bred, caddish, sycophantic slave.

The ichthyosaurus-philosophy is an attempt to undermine the whole edifice of human tradition with regard to the "true," the "good," the "beautiful." Its own "true" is a profane wonder and admiration in the presence of the old immemorial simplicities. Its own "good" is the oldest of aboriginal forms of "goodness"—just natural good-will in place of cruelty. Its own "beautiful" is any group of simple sense-impressions that it has learnt to enjoy and to become one with. By carrying its contempt for action to a psychic extreme, the lonely soul can often work a strange cosmogonic miracle. It can unweave our whole human life-tapestry. It can work back, down through all the æons and all the avatars, into the original *primum mobile* which was the warp and weft of the First Cause's initial gesture in the darkness of Its primordial dream.

There are, in fact, two issues open to the individual mind. It may bend all its forces to the task of "improving" (changing) the nature of things ; or it may bend all its forces to the task of contemplating (enjoying) the nature of things. If it chooses the former, it will, at best, be able to say at death, " I have improved the world." If it chooses the latter, it will, at worst, be able to say at death, " I have enjoyed Life." The obvious commentary on this would be that a person might combine the two, and cry with his last breath, " I have enjoyed life by improving the world ! " But it is a secret law of the mind that one or the other (*either* contemplation *or* action) *has* to come first. And it is only about life's main purpose we are now contending. The other, without question, must play *some* kind of a part if we are to live in this complicated world at all.

There are two other issues, however, implicit in all this. Science and Philosophy are both engaged in contemplating life—but, to *know* it, rather than to *enjoy* it. It is easy to prove the superiority of enjoying over knowing (although the latter may sometimes be of assistance to the former), when one considers that the first honest glance one turns upon the surface of life reveals as its irresistible quality that it is designed rather to be enjoyed than understood. Poetry and Art, however, have as their peculiar and natural function the expression of this exultant, if tragic, enjoyment ; and it is for this reason that the great poets and artists are much more illuminating, even in matters of what is called truth, than are the professional savants.

It seems to me quite clear why this should be so,

since the only "truth" of the universe that is worthy of the name is the radiation, the evocation of *living vision*, such as comes into existence when any "self," possessed of the primal innocence of eye, encounters the "not-self." Let the methods of "understanding the universe" employed by science go on leading to discovery after discovery, and invention after invention ! None of this touches the point, the quick, the pulse, the magic, the *essence* of the real problem, which is, the relation between the individual soul and the mystery of life.

Why I have presumed to call this poor, clumsy "philosophy" of the ichthyosaurus-ego by so daring a name as the first hint of a new Culture, a new Religion, is, that it liberates once again that magnetic life-sap in the depths of our being which has been sterilised by the industrial system and by society. The power that comes from the purely human in us does not seem to leap up with a strong enough jet of force. Like the rising of water, it needs that it should come from deep *below* the earth and at the same time from high *above* the earth, to possess the necessary *élan*. Let my reader now, at this very moment, sink into his deepest nature, and try and analyse the wretched fear, un-ease, anxiety, futility, restless discomfort that he finds there. Let him ask himself why he is not happy. He will find, I believe, that the cause is simply that he has lost faith in the power of his own will—*not his will to act*, but that much more important, imaginative will that implies a mental gesture of enjoyment directed straight at the heart of life.

The philosophy of the ichthyosaurus-ego—that lonely soul which abides in all living consciousness—is the philosophy of assuming as the purpose of life nothing more objective than the cumulative overtones of the sense-impressions, which we all feel and which we all contemplate, in the cosmic mirror. Such static contemplation is the negation of all motion, of all energy, of all striving, except the actual intellectual energy of contemplation itself and the initial warfare to reach such moments.

It is nonsense to say that since we are all *compelled* by necessity to strive, therefore such striving, such activity, is the purpose of life. The mere fact of this “compelling” reduces our practical activity to the level of an irrelevance, a by-issue, a mere automatic but necessary treading of the inevitable treadmill. It is only where life is entirely our own—namely when we are digesting the essences of life—that we can talk of a “purpose” at all. The “purpose” of every living organism is to sink back, and out, and away, into that primordial ecstasy of contemplative enjoyment which was the life of God before He was driven forward by some fatal urge into His ambiguous rôle of creator-destroyer.

What the old, sly wisdom of this Saurian of the Cosmic Mud had discovered among his weather-stained rock-hieroglyphics is that the urge which has thrust into our conscience the feeling that every kind of pleasurable sensation—from touch, sight, smell, and taste—is wrong, is not an urge proceeding from the “goodness” of the First Cause, but from the “wickedness” of the First Cause. Let us defy this urge to

practical activity except where it is necessary in order to live ! Let us put as much stoical resolution into holding tight to our contemplative concentration—into gathering up our essences of experience—as others put into the mental gesture of refusing to eat, drink, or amorously embrace the sunlit flanks and moonlit breasts of the *idola* of Life.

No poignant, intimate, intense philosophy can exist without a great deal of stoical iron in it. The sense-impressions that I am advocating in this defence of a universal psychic sensuality must be indential with those original sense-impressions of the Eternal Being before It acquired Its restless desire to create and to destroy.

Yes, there was perhaps a time when the First Cause of all these pluralistic worlds lived to Itself in some unthinkable eternity of contemplation, parallel to our own gazing in the cosmic mirror which is now the only lasting happiness of all its creatures. And indeed we might presume to hold the profane opinion that one side of its terrifying duality is still occupied in no very different way ! If this be not too fantastic a speculation, it would mean that every time a person ceased to worry about work, or about money, or about fame, or about reputation, or about his country, his principles, his convictions, his future, and gave himself up to the pure intellectual enjoyment of psychic-sensual contemplation, he was in reality sinking down, through the ocean-floor of life, into that portion of the First Cause's Being which still protests, and will eternally protest, against the restless activity of the other side of its divided nature.

For the ichthyosaurus-ego the problem of the First Cause is far easier to deal with than that of Christ. It is perfectly true that the everlasting riddle to the nature of the sub-human in us is this mysterious Love of Christ or Love of the Saints. This is the thing about which it continually hears rumours—about which it continually hears, and indeed sees, many strange evidences. Let us ask this question, How does this feeling of universal “love” for all living things differ from the lonely soul’s ecstasy of contemplation?

The ichthyosaurus-ego knows well enough that when it “contemplates” its mate or its offspring, or when in the great cosmic mirror it gazes at a particular hillside, or river-bank, or seashore, or forest-clearing, or marsh-ditch, or moor-path, it embraces these objects with its whole nature, sinking into them, mingling with them, drawing their essences into itself. It knows well enough that the basis of its ecstasy is at once psychic and sensual. It eats what it contemplates. It enjoys—with a sublimated sexual abandonment—what it contemplates. As it looks at the far-off twilight horizon, or at the nearby furrows of a ploughed field, or at the human forms it loves, the sensuality of its glance *seems* directed toward something in the nature of Being that is more than flesh-and-blood, more than just air and earth and water. This feeling of “more” may, of course, be an illusion. But, on the other hand, some sort of recession into the thickness of Being there probably is—some “more” of the quality that attracts us existing behind these things.

Yes, behind the calm loveliness of that horizon,

behind the massive sacramental bread of that ploughed field, behind the desirable flesh-and-blood of our mate or offspring, there seems to exist a deeper essence. William James once had an inspiration about this "more"; but he spoilt it by mixing it up with his contemptible pragmatism. From Heraclitus to Wordsworth there have been great soothsayers who have implicitly recognised the truth that it is really by a sort of diffused "lust" that the lonely soul ravishes the fleeting essence of Life in all its multiple incarnations.

Let me not be misunderstood ! Those tragic desperations of pity, of sympathy, of love—those tremulous and quivering projections of our feelings into the sorrows of other entities, whereby *we become what we behold*—do not cease to touch and even to obsess the lonely ichthyosaurus-ego because it has obstinately set itself to "enjoy" Life. The difference is that while the warm-blooded gregarious soul seeks to excuse to itself and cover up from itself, as lapses into monstrous selfishness, those cold withdrawals of its inmost identity from the fevers of sympathy, the lonely ichthyosaurus-ego retreats into its planetary Life-lust without the least flicker of remorse. Its gestures of pity, of sympathy, of vibrant tenderness toward tragic suffering, pass, like ripples caused by the wind, across the deep static mirror of its secret life. The mere fact of its inhuman detachment gives it indeed a certain advantage, even when it comes to unselfish activity on behalf of others, over less egoistic natures. For instance, its benefactions are not limited to worthy, meritorious, or even grateful recipients. When it acts unselfishly, it does so with a

cold, detached humility that asks for no return, no gratitude, no recognition. Its "goodness," in fact, is the deep, ancient, non-human "goodness" of those remote subconscious entities who indulged their dreamy "life-lust" long before the passionate moral fever of progress in "spirituality" entered, like sweet-foaming, poisonous wine, the nerves of saintly renunciants

IX

Alone ! that is what we have to face. Every living soul throughout this chaotic world is utterly *alone*—alone with a First Cause that is almost as evil as It is good. But not quite as evil ! Ay, there is throughout the universe a faint quiver of the balances on the good side.

Let us face the situation. Here we are, lying on our mud-bed or floating in space, holding tight to our mate or to our offspring. But they also are alone, alone with this ambiguous First Cause, even as we are.

The only philosophy worth anything is one that can make, at a crisis, with the whole nature of its organism, a clear-cut, unconquerable gesture. When things are at their worst, when your true-love or your offspring lies sick unto death and all things are grey, ghastly, sickening, and over the surface of all inanimate things lies a cold, livid, sticky sweat, *then* is the moment to lift up a defiant curse upon God. And yet, *then* also is the moment to offer unspeakable thanks to God for having given you this oasis of love in an all-hating world ! Then is the moment for clutching so tightly to your heart the essence of your Love's being, that, even though the body decomposes, nothing henceforth can separate you.

Alone ! That is what we have to face. And our true-love and our offspring have to face it too. Every human

soul is far more alone than, in its gregarious stupidity, it has any notion of.

Not a single hour of the day but one ought to realise this loneliness and say to oneself the magic formula, "Enjoy—defy—forget." *Enjoy* the universe, even though your life is completely broken up ; *defy* God at the same time that you thank Him for the gift of Life ; *forget* the evil in God which is the cause of all suffering—such are the profane doctrines of my new religion !

One is sometimes driven to wonder whether that abysmal resistance to the pressure of the life-force which elsewhere I have named " Inert Malice " is really as evil a thing as the brutality and cruelty which activity generates. Unmalicious Inertness is certainly not evil. It is the dreaming sleep of the harmless half-consciousness of primordial matter. And one even feels dimly able to sympathise with this inertness of the aboriginal mud resisting the proddings of the life-energy when that force stirs it up !

Sometimes it seems to me that *the look of all looks* which some cruel person—some Emperor, some Inquisitor, some Torturer, some avenging Lyncher—would dread the most, as he returned to his retreat after some horrible deed, would be the cold, deadly, ophidian look—older than China or Egypt, older than Stonehenge—in the half-shut eye of the ichthyosaurus-ego. The look in the eye of the unselfish Saint might contain a sort of warm, human indulgence that might give this Son of the Wickedness of God a dim kind of reassurance. But in the saurian eye of the ichthyosaurus-ego he would realise that he had brought down upon

himself the oldest and most terrible of all curses, a curse out of the primordial non-human abyss, such as would send him off to spend the rest of his life hunting for the River of Lethe.

Oh, how often do we feel, as we cross the field at dawn or at twilight, that there emanates a healing calm from Nature—a flowing, innocent, ancient calm—which makes the fevers, the meannesses, the ambitions, the greeds, the jealousies, the treacheries, the hot furies of the human race, nay, many of its gregarious love-spasms, seem loathsome in comparison ! Over and over again does it occur, as we waver between opposite human motives—the motive of warm, human *selfishness*, for instance, and the motive of warm, human *unselfishness*—that we are suddenly seized with a deep loathing for them both. O to escape altogether from this hot, dusty, fever-smitten arena ! And such an escape offers itself. Such an escape is within us. Something exists in our own being that responds to this magical calm of “ mute, insensate things.” Something exists in our own being that belongs to an ancient “ Earthly Paradise ” of peace and quiet, untouched by these hot sweats and beating pulses. Something exists within us that utters strange, refreshing premonitions of a godlike state in the future, beyond all these human contentions.

Let us get down to the root of the whole matter. Human life, wherever you go, seems plague-stricken with a fatal, clinging dry-rot of futile unhappiness. This unhappiness is not merely due to poverty, to unemployment, to oppression, to sickness, to death. *It is an infectious insanity !* What I am revealing in this book is that this

mad unhappiness has a definite cause—and a cause that can be removed if we have faith in the power of our own will.

Everyone, I suppose, has known a few of those mad, evil moments when one's brain tightens and hurts as if an iron band had been drawn round it. These are the moments when we have lost the power of losing ourselves in our contemplation of the "not-self." Only by losing ourselves in this can we grow sane and happy. And the more intellectual our effort is to concentrate on this Cosmic Mirror, the more clear, definite, and distinct does our inmost identity grow. We die, in fact, to live. Madness comes when our inward visions lose their imaginative outwardness. They need not be *realistically* outward. They can be our visions as we lie on a sick-bed in a hospital or prison. But they must be *imaginatively* outward. That is to say, there must be a centrifugal and centripetal rhythmic beat, a systole and diastole, an in-breathing and out-breathing, between one's soul and these images in the great Mirror. And, indeed, just as it is madness to be confined by the iron band of the vicious circle of our immediate thoughts rather than to escape into our memories, so it is madness, on a still greater scale, to allow the iron band of human tradition to prevent us from wandering through all Nature, entirely emancipated from the human tradition, and enjoying the centrifugal and centripetal breathings, out and in, of vast, non-human, planetary levels of life.

The philosophy of the ichthyosaurus-ego concentrates day and night on its ultimate attitude to the mystery of being alive at all. This is a mystery shared by many

entities completely outside the human circle. And thus, while the lonely soul is always able to gather itself together and *start its pilgrimage afresh every day*, it is not merely with childish interest and simple curiosity as to just what is going to happen next that it contemplates its surroundings, but also with the calm, prolonged, unfeverish satisfaction of an animal-god drinking from a sacred river, or of a man-god staring into a sacred mirror.

The tendency to find pleasure in cruelty must be obliterated, the tendency to find satisfaction in worldly ambition must be outgrown, every too-human "sense of humour" (the last impertinence of ignoble minds) must be dissipated into thin air, before the deep, sweet, contemplative rapture, which is the cosmic secret, begins to respond to the water-mill or windmill of our cunning psychic ritual.

What the ichthyosaurus-ego is an adept in, is nothing less than that short-cut to the Essence of Being, which used to be symbolised under the mythical image of the Philosopher's Stone.

Like Faust making the Sign of the Earth-Spirit, the human soul that has learnt the value of loneliness stands on a point outside the whirling of Time and Space, and, staring into the Mirror of Life, alternately destroys and builds up its universe. He destroys it by forgetting what he wills to forget, out of the floating fragments and morsels of memory. He builds it up by concentrating on certain symbolic images of his permanent happiness, till, from these captured *eidola*, eternally new worlds emerge.

The philosophy of the ichthyosaurus-ego is an art of simplifying the universe and reducing it to such clear-cut outlines that the soul no longer feels lost in it. Are we at the bottom of things or are we not? That is the question. From my point of view there is no such thing as "dead matter," no such thing as chemical, magnetic, dynamic force outside the circle of living organisms. All the matter we encounter, all the chemistry and electricity we encounter, belongs to the mysterious body of some semi-conscious soul. The world is a pluralistic universe, wherein an assemblage of bodies and souls, some visible, some invisible, struggle for their own individual vision.

But it is difficult, and well-nigh impossible, for the human mind to eliminate the notion of a responsible First Cause. Every living creature must, in fact, share the duality of this First Cause and contain within itself both good and evil. Our own soul, therefore, the soul of the ichthyosaurus-ego, contains the conflicting elements of good and evil. Evil is brutality. Evil is cruelty. There is no other evil than these.

How simple is the universe when revealed in this way! The soul within us can gather all its forces together at any moment to deal with a world thus simplified. Here lies the value of life-symbols. Logical definitions, newly-coined mathematical expressions, mean nothing at all to an organism like ours, composed of intuition, emotion, imagination, desire, and the power of free-will. We must possess quickly realisable *life-symbols*—symbols that can be clutched in those moments of crisis when it is a matter of life and death

to keep our heads. And these life-symbols must be very simple. The heart, the sex-nerves, the imagination, the will, must have some image of the ultimate dramatic situation which is palpable, tangible, concrete.

Such a palpable image is offered to us in the idea of our lonely soul wrestling night and day with the First Cause, defying Its cruelty and obstinately thanking It for our power of defiance ! Here is a tangible object for the undercurrent of our consciousness. Here is the cumulated creation of a living-habit by which we grow stronger and stronger, happier and happier. Heraclitus long ago uttered the profound “ logos ” that *life in itself is war*. In the depths of our consciousness we are forever fighting to overcome our own tendency to cruelty and to obliterate the tendency to cruelty in the First Cause.

It sometimes seems as if our souls had the power of drawing upon the actual conscious Being of the First Cause, both for good and for evil ! Strange, mysterious *Artesian wells* there must be, descending into the nature of this ultimate entity. When our intellectualised day-dreams are lovely, delicious, calm, ecstatic, *then* we are drawing upon the primordial peace of the First Cause. When we are teased and worried and mad and unhappy, *then* we are drawing upon the primordial misery and restlessness of the First Cause. The reason why it is necessary to crowd out so much that is “ human ” in our nature, and evoke so much that is “ non-human,” is that there is more of this *peace of the ultimate* in rocks and stones and trees, in the fields of dawn and the fields of twilight, than in the feverish loves and hates, the

toiling labours and lively pastimes, the poisonous ambitions and crazy ascetisms of normal human life.

When the great Jean-Jacques Rousseau, at the end of his days, fell upon the peace and quiet of lonely botanising, he was not escaping from life. He was, at last, after all his trials, blunders, and manias, entering into the secret of life. The secret of life is not found in the hubbub and hurly-burly of "reality." It is found in certain rare overtones and undertones in which we forget this unreal reality. Whenever a girl or a boy looks in a concentrated trance out of some open window at the roof-tiles or the tree-tops, forgetting work, responsibilities, problems, worries—feeling a thrilling happiness in merely being alive—the whole purpose of the stupendous panorama of Being is completely attained.

Our experience of existence is twofold. We have to bustle about the world to earn an honest living. We have to be considerate to our family ; we have to give of our substance to those who are poorer than we are ; we have to face the jolts and jars of the market-place. But below all these things, below our consideration for our family, below our working at our job, goes on for ever that inner ecstatic life of secret, intense enjoyment which belongs to ourselves alone.

How hollow and remote fall upon our ears the famous appeals of the moral preachers that we should enter some drastic evolutionary struggle to spiritualise our bewildered human nature ! There is no need to spiritualise it. From the senses, from the nerves, from the intellect, come those simple, immemorial feelings that mount naturally, up and up, and out and out, till,

embracing the Earth, our conscious mother, and the Sun, our conscious father, and the wind, rain, and dew, our evasive sisters, and the trees, our rooted brothers, we stretch out our hands to the mystery of Space and Time, and cry our "*Vixi !*" to the universe.

Never need our ecstasy in life imply any slavish acceptance of the social "Real World" of the human ant-heap. We are seekers "after something in the world that is there in no satisfying measure or not at all." In other words, it is from our own "mythology" of the living earth and air and water, not from any chemical analysis of the dead corpses of these things, that we select the essence by which we live.

There is abroad in the air just now a new sort of morbid puritanism, according to which there is an imperative upon us to saturate ourselves with ugliness. The sick, harsh, acrid, protruding tumour-bristles of this Reality of Horror which these insane æsthetic moralists command us to face or be self-confessed life-shirkers, *we refuse to face*. On the contrary, we use our imaginative will to raze it from memory, to blot it out from perception ! Why should we reject the tedious imperatives of the ant-hill only to fall into a new æsthetic slavery of horror-masochism ?

The few, simple, elemental things we require for the intellectual day-dreams of our "mythology"—things like the sun and the moon and the planets, things like grass and trees and earth-mould and salt-water and fresh water—are always there ! No insane realist can turn the living Night into chemistry, or the breathing Day into mathematics. And as long as we can taste

bread and milk and honey, as long as we can warm ourselves at a fire, as long as we can hear the waves breaking on the beach or the wind rustling in the trees, we can fall into the sacred dreams we seek.

We can defy these moral scavengers even as we defy the First Cause. And, recalling our old ecstasies on this road, or in that doorway, at this window, or on that hillside, we can build up the Beatific Vision of our secret life in furtive, crafty contempt both for the community-thought of our age and for the commercial or industrial labour by which we earn our living ! Here lies the whole issue. We all have to pay toll to the race for what we take from it. But whatever system is established—capitalistic, communistic, or otherwise—in the land where we live, our devotion to efficiency, to justice, to the proletariat, or to our family cannot occupy the whole margin of our days or satisfy the whole craving of our nature. Underlying all our practical activity, there flows, deep and strong and clear, the subterranean river of our real happiness. Into this river, into these brooding earth-dreams, half sensual, half mystical, we have the power of sinking whenever we will to have it so.

Alone, alone, alone ! It is better to accustom ourselves as deeply, as constantly, as we can to this. If, with the *eidolon* of our mate, of our offspring, lying, like a crystal within a crystal, in the circle of our hard, integrated soul, our loneliness be a rich loneliness, so much the better ! But “ rich ” or “ poor,” it is alone we deal with life, and alone we deal with the First Cause.

In its loneliness the self within us thinks of itself as

suspended in a great void. It is better to learn the art of deriving a strange exultation from this feeling, than to have our loneliness, which none can escape, withering in upon us like a draught through a crack in the cosmos-door ! In fact, all the ecstasy we get from the most magical moments of our life were best associated with this feeling of *being alone in the void*. If we achieve this psychic balance upon the eternal tight-rope, we are once for all absolutely safe from the shiver of ultimate futility. But the self in its loneliness must carry its habitual awareness a little further still. It must not allow itself to be fooled by that old, reiterated, tricky argument—used by tiresome apologists for every creed—that, “ because the finite mind cannot understand the infinite,” *therefore* the dog with three heads is the same as the dog with one head ! The self must recognise that its power of perception is limited by its own inherent nature. It must recognise that all things are obscure, all mysterious, all miraculous, all incredible. It must acquire the power of saying to itself that *this whole obvious situation*—the existence of a conscious animal-vegetable-human body, upon a planet circling around a flaming sun in measureless ether—is just a mere dream-image, liable to melt away when we die into some completely different dream-image. It must acquire the power of saying to itself that although the basic constitution of its intelligence is so framed that it is driven to think of what it calls a First Cause in such-and-such a way, the real nature of the system of things may be completely otherwise, and there may really be no place for such a Being at all !

Nor need the ichthyosaurus-ego meditating upon its mud-bed stop even there in its sceptical contemplations. This dualistic First Cause, with whose ambiguous personality it keeps up its dialogue of alternate gratitude and defiance, may in reality be only a weak intermediary Demiurge, and the real "Emperor of the Universe" be so remote, so far away, that no prophet, priest, or magician has ever so much as snatched a hint of His nature.

Alone, alone, alone ! The grand secret of cosmic happiness lies in growing more and more deeply aware of this loneliness, whether it be the "rich" loneliness that embraces a mate and offspring, or the "poor" loneliness that hath none. It is only by this feeling of loneliness that we can escape the gregarious warmth of the crowd, that murderous enemy of all deep joy, and detach ourself from the fever of human ideals. It is only by this feeling of loneliness that we can annihilate the preposterous claims of a life of action, and return to the calm reservoirs of earth, air, water, and fire, from which, as our soul contemplates them, emerge those lovely essences, the constant enjoyment of which constitutes the only indestructible ecstasy of life.

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